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Eustia of the Tarnished Wings: The Visual Novel in Translation

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EUSTIA OF THE TARNISHED WINGS:
THE VISUAL NOVEL IN TRANSLATION

A Thesis Presented
by
MATTHEW R. BIRD

Submitted to the Graduate School of the
University of Massachusetts, Amherst in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

May 2016

Japanese

EUSTIA OF THE TARNISHED WINGS:
THE VISUAL NOVEL IN TRANSLATION

A Thesis Presented

By

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DEDICATION

To my parents, without whose support I wouldn't have made it this far.

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Professor Stephen Forrest, for understanding and academic support.

Lecturer Yuki Yoshimura, for allowing me to vent quite unprofessionally at times.

Librarian Susan Domier, for being as dependable as all librarians should aspire to be.

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And so many others who kept me focused and kept me sane, or at least to a reasonable approximation.

ABSTRACT

EUSTIA OF THE TARNISHED WINGS: THE VISUAL NOVEL IN TRANSLATION

MAY 2016

MATTHEW R. BIRD, B.A., TUFTS UNIVERSITY

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Directed by: Professor Bruce Baird

The center of this thesis proposal is a translation of the first book of AUGUST Software's *Eustia of the Tarnished Wings* 穢翼のユースティア, a 2011 dark fantasy visual novel. As visual novels are practically unknown in English or Japanese academic writing, this thesis will provide an introduction to the medium's history, as well as common display and organizational formats of the medium; a literary overview of *Eustia of the Tarnished Wings* and its characters and themes of choice and sacrifice; and a discussion of translation methodology and goals pursued in the accompanying appendices.

The translation presented consists of selected excerpts from the Prologue of *Eustia of the Tarnished Wings*, introducing the main characters, the floating city-state of Novus Aether, and the uneasy social climate of the city. Presented scenes are selected on the basis of plot or thematic relevance or translational interest, as well as scenes that are necessary to contextualize plot or character developments discussed in the critical introduction.

This thesis will serve as an introduction to a developing medium that has been overlooked by most academics in the field of Japanese popular culture, as well as a look

at the utilization of choice mechanics and branching story structure to involve the reader's own choices in the narrative. In addition, it will present a personal methodology of and approach to translation as related to *Eustia*'s many and varied characters, social strata and situations, and maintaining individual and consistent voices for different characters and a first-person narrator in fiction.

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INTRODUCTION

The term ‘visual novel’ (ビジュアルノベル *bijuaru noberu*) is a fairly new term for a medium that is not much older. Visual novels, a type of computer software, occupy an intriguing space somewhere in-between more established media formats; they present the text of a novel, accompanied by the background art and character designs of manga, with the music, sound effects and voice acting of an animated show. Some visual novels even utilize limited 2D or 3D animation. With a wide variety of genres represented, from horror to science fiction to romance to historical fiction, visual novels are a rapidly expanding, emergent medium – the fan-run aggregation site Visual Novel Database (VNDB.org) lists over 18,000 commercial and fan-published visual novels and separately marketed materials,¹ with the earliest listed release date in May of 1983.

The economic and cultural impact of the visual novel medium in the *dōjinshi* and commercial spheres, and the complex interplay of adaptations, re-adaptations, supplements, and stylistic and content influences between visual novels, manga, anime and light novels, deserves a much deeper analysis than is possible in this introduction. Instead, this introduction will present a brief overview of the medium’s history and common display and organizational formats of the medium; a literary overview of AUGUST Company’s 2011 dark fantasy visual novel *Eustia of the Tarnished Wings* (穢翼のユースティア *aiyoku no yūsutia*) and its characters and themes of choice and

¹As of December 2015, VNDB lists 362 pages of visual novels, each page showing 50 novels each, for a total of 18,074 visual novels and/or individually marketed supplementary materials.

sacrifice; and a discussion of translation methodology and goals pursued in the accompanying translated appendices.

CHAPTER 1

HISTORY AND FORMAT OF THE VISUAL NOVEL

A. History

While the roots of the visual novel can arguably be found in text-based adventure games and interactive fiction such as Infocom's 1980 release *Zork I*, the first hugely impactful step toward its recognition as a separate medium came in 1992 with the release of *Saint John's Wort* (弟切草 otogirisō) by Japanese game developer Spike-Chunsoft. *Saint John's Wort* was a 'sound novel' (サウンドノベル saundo noberu), a trademark format of Spike-Chunsoft that paired text with audio and simple images to heighten reader investment and immersion. In the same year, ELF Corporation's *Classmates* (同級生 dōkyūsei) was released, becoming the first in a successful series of erotic dating simulation games.²

In 1994, Spike-Chunsoft released the mystery sound novel *Banshee's Last Cry* (かまいたちの夜 kamaitachi no yoru). An experiment for the format, *Banshee's Last Cry* showed that augmented text formats could successfully feature complex plotlines; and in 1996, Leaf Company released *Drip* (雫 shizuku) and *Scars* (痕 kizuato), which were branded as 'visual novels' both to avoid infringing on Spike-Chunsoft's trademarked 'sound novel' term and to highlight the addition of more sophisticated visuals, including character art in a strongly manga-influenced style (done by Minazuki

² While dating simulation games and visual novels are not interchangeable, the two formats have exerted influence on each other; a detailed exploration is beyond the scope of this paper, but in general, a visual novel presents one or more storylines for the reader to follow, while a dating simulation is more interactive, for example giving a reader a certain number of in-game days to win the heart of a character by scheduling dates, giving gifts, and having conversations.

Tōru 水無 月徹). *Drip* and *Scars* combined dark, affecting storylines with erotic adult content, and along with Leaf's 1997 release *To Heart*, these three novels had a major influence on the popularity of the medium.

As software grew more advanced, more intricate and detailed visual novels were released, and the thriving fan publishing, or *dōjinshi*, community began to expand into visual novels as well. In 2000, *dōjinshi* circle Type-Moon published *Tsukihime* 月姫 at Comics Market 59, kickstarting the hugely popular “Nasuverse”, named for lead writer and director Nasu Kinoko 奈須 きのこ. Later Type-Moon releases included the smash hit visual novel *Fate/stay Night* (フェイト・ステイナイト *feito sutei naito*) in 2004, which has been adapted several times into manga, TV anime series, video games, and light novels. While not the first visual novel adapted into an animated series, *Fate/stay Night* and its related properties played a huge role in popularizing the medium, and the franchise remains a commanding presence more than ten years after its inception, with a successful smartphone game, *Fate/Grand Order*, and three theatrical animated films currently in production as of May 2016. In 2010's *Anime and the Visual Novel*, Dani Cavallaro lists some 30 anime series adapted from visual novels between 1999 and 2009, a list that is by no means exhaustive,³ and one that has expanded in recent years with titles such as *Majikoi: Oh! Samurai Girls* (マジで私に恋しなさい! *maji de watashi ni koi shinasai*) (2011) and *Utawarerumono: The False Faces* (うたわれるもの・偽りの

³ Dani Cavallaro. *Anime and the Visual Novel: Narrative Structure, Design and Play at the Crossroads of Animation and Computer Games* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2010).

仮面 utawarerumono itsuwari no kamen) (2015) proving critically successful and commercially viable.

B. The Visual Novel Format

The three most significant aspects of the visual novel format are the visual presentation of the screen itself; the audio components of music, voice acting and sound effects; and of course, the text of the novel itself. The examples given below serve only as a broad introduction to the general format; many visual novels modify this format to a lesser or greater extent. Most visual novels that are sold as physical units are distributed on a CD, and thus a computer with a disk drive is required to play them; however, some are distributed online and can be downloaded on multiple system configurations.

1. Visuals: The Screen



Figure 1: Diagram of the visual interface

The most immediately recognizable feature of the visual novel genre is, fittingly enough, the visual organization of the screen on which the novel is read. Most visual

novels utilize a standard format for visual presentation; it could be argued that it is this standard format that makes a visual novel a visual novel instead of a voiced animatic or a novel with illustrations, though many variations on the format exist.

The above screenshot, taken from Act 1 of *Eustia of the Tarnished Wings*,⁴ shows the general layout of the visual novel screen. At the bottom of the screen is the text box (1), where character dialogue, the internal narration of main character Kaim Astraea, and occasionally onomatopoeia (擬音語 giongo) such as ガチャッ, the sound of a door opening, will be shown (2). Clicking anywhere on screen will cause the text to advance in set increments, generally line-by-line. In most cases, particularly with lines that are voice-acted, one sentence constitutes a line; text will almost never be displayed in a full paragraph, preventing the reader from skimming through a large amount of text and slowing the pace of reading

When a character is speaking, the text box will display a tag (3) that gives his or her name. This name tag can also play a role in the reader's narrative experience. When Kaim is physically present in a scene (and thus serving as the narrator), tags are tied to and limited by his knowledge of the characters involved - when someone Kaim does not recognize and cannot see enters a scene, the name tag displays three question marks, and when he learns new information, the name tags are updated to reflect this. For example, in Appendix 2, Kaim mistakenly assumes that Vice-Captain Lang is the leader of the Wing Hunter detachment he has run into, but once he is referred to by his rank, Lang's dialogue tag changes from 'Wing Hunter Commander' 羽狩りの指揮者 to 'Wing

⁴ See Appendix 4.

Hunter Vice-Captain' 羽狩りの副隊長, and once more to 'Vice-Captain Lang' ラング副隊長 once Captain Fione uses his name in front of Kaim.⁵ Characters who are introduced in one of the few scenes that are presented in third-person narration rather than Kaim's first-person limited narration will be given the proper name tags for the duration of the scene, but once they enter a scene tied to Kaim's narration and physical viewpoint, their dialogue will be tagged with simple physical identifiers (such as 'Priest' or 'Assistant') until they introduce themselves to Kaim.

Above the text box are character sprites (立ち絵 *tachie*, lit. 'standing art') (4).

These sprites are generally full-body, and depending on the novel, can be entirely static, switch between a limited number of pre-drawn poses and facial expressions (as in *Eustia*), show limited animation (blinking and simulated movement side-to-side), or even show full animation through the use of 3D character models. Sprites generally flip side-to-side depending on character placement, and change with each click to match the dialogue that is being said. On the left side of the text box, a character bust portrait (5) visually identifies the speaker, even if there is also a standing sprite for the speaker present. These portraits also change with each dialogue line, and can keep characters visually present on-screen even in a group conversation scene where there is no room for multiple character sprites.

⁵ Appendix 2, page 77.

Backgrounds (6) are an important part of the visual novel format as well. Depending on the production budget, developers may use stock photography for backgrounds such as a classroom or the exterior of a school,⁶ or use hand-drawn landscapes and interior shots. Consistent use of one particular background for one particular location in the novel can give the reader a sense of familiarity with the location, allowing them to engage with the text and the characters on a closer level. Most visual novels also use CGs (コンピューターグラフィックス konpyūtā gurafikkusu, ‘computer graphics’), detailed pieces of art that replace the background and remove the standing sprites, for impactful scenes in the narrative or as a reward for reaching certain points in



Figure 2: An example CG

the novel. CGs allow for more visually dramatic scenes than standing sprites do, and for visual novels with sexual content, allow the portrayal of sexual activity between characters.

The control panel (7) seems largely self-explanatory, but it is one of the most central points of the visual novel interface. Visual novels provide the ability to save on almost any line of text, the ability to review text that has already been displayed, and in

⁶ Four Leaf Studios, the collaborative team behind American indie visual novel *Katawa Shoujo* [sic] (2012), used photographs from around Brown University as background art. (https://www.reddit.com/r/katawashoujo/comments/1ibiya/for_those_who_dont_know_the_background_pictures/)

some cases, the ability to “jump back” to previous scenes; analogous to putting in a bookmark, the save feature allows the reader to halt the narrative wherever he or she pleases, and like a video game, records the reader’s choice history in the novel – a feature that will be discussed below. This control panel, and the suite of reading options it allows the reader, remains the biggest difference between visual novels and narrative-heavy video games that blur the lines between these two nominally separate genres of media. Compare the screenshots below – two are from visual novels, and two are from Japanese RPGs (role-playing games), which combine a similarly involved and plot-heavy narrative with gameplay styles and elements that can be as varied and interactive as any other genre of video game.



Figure 3: Comparison of several visual novel and JRPG interfaces

Clockwise from the top-left are *Eustia of the Tarnished Wings*; *Nekopara: Cats' Paradise Vol. 1*;⁷ *Hyperdimension Neptunia 2*;⁸ and *Tales of Zestiria*.⁹ *Eustia* and *Nekopara* are both visual novels, while *Neptunia* and *Zestiria* are JRPGs. The screenshots provided for the latter two are from character conversations that occur outside of the normal, battle-centric gameplay. Note the similarities in presentation between the “standard” visual novel format and the format used by the two JRPGs; there is no clear and immediate visual distinction between the two categories of media, and the differences that do exist (*Zestiria* highlighting the speaking character, the 3D models and full-range animation used in *Nekopara*) are variations at most on a common theme. The major difference is the control panel, which is highlighted in red in the screenshots from *Eustia* and *Nekopara*. While increasing numbers of video games, particularly JRPGs, are adopting the visual novel format of text box and standing sprites, they do not allow the player to save in the middle of a cutscene or character dialogue; in this sense, while video games allow players more interactivity with the action on-screen, visual novels provide readers more control over the narrative experience – not only in terms of its flow, but even in terms of choosing the direction of the narrative itself.

2. Audio: Music and Voice

The second benefit to the software format is the inclusion of audio – music, sound effects, and voice acting, depending on production values. Almost all visual novels use

⁷ Sayori. *Nekopara: Cats' Paradise Vol. 1: Soleil, Open For Business* ネコパラヴォリューム1 : ソレイユ開店しました! (2013). NekoWorkS. Steam Edition, PC.

⁸ Tsunako. *Hyperdimension Neptunia 2 Re;Birth SISTERS GENERATION* 超次元ゲームネプチューンmk2 Re;Birth SISTERS GENERATION (2015). Compile Heart. Steam Edition, PC.

⁹ Yamamoto Naoki and Hasegawa Takashi. *Tales of Zestiria* テイルズ オブ ゼスティリア (2015). Bandai Namco. Steam Edition, PC.

background music to set the atmosphere of a scene, to accentuate tension, or to showcase a character's personal theme. Music may start or stop on any line change, allowing the developer fine control over the emotional impact of a scene. Sound effects such as opening doors, the clash of blades, or the sounds of footsteps can also add immersion to the reading experience, and can add tension to a battle or a chase scene. Most important, however, is voice acting. Depending on the visual novel, the text may be fully voiced, partially voiced, or not voiced at all; American indie visual novel *Katawa Shoujo* [sic] does not use voice acting, while Japanese visual novel *Okujō no Yurirei-san* 屋上の百合霊さん (published in English as *Kindred Spirits on the Roof*)¹⁰ uses voice-acting only for emotionally impactful scenes such as love confessions or character introspection. *Eustia of the Tarnished Wings* provides voice-acting for all non-narration text, both for main characters and for unnamed side characters. This can help with immersion and with understanding characters' motivations and emotions, as well as provide context for certain scenes – for example, if a character whose identity is obscured speaks with a recognizable voice, an astute reader may pick up on their identity before it is explicitly stated. Voice acting may also lend a threat or entreaty more power, and give more life to friendly banter or flirting. Voice acting may appear to be extraneous to the text itself, but when used, it is an indispensable part of the visual novel reading experience.

3. Text: The Story

One of the biggest advantages visual novels have over books and other physical media is the lack of physical constraints on the text. On the most basic level, this means

¹⁰ *Kindred Spirits On The Roof* 屋上の百合霊さん (2016). Liar Soft. Steam Edition, PC.

that visual novels can be virtually unlimited in length compared to a physical book. For example, I estimate that a complete English translation of *Eustia* will measure around 500,000 words, and the fan-run translation wiki TLWiki lists *Eustia* at merely 43rd for Japanese script size.¹¹ This is hefty for an individual novel, and as a paper-and-ink text, *Eustia* would almost certainly be divided into its six component Books, which could be sold as a novel series to bypass the problems of weight and bulk inherent to lengthy physical books. Instead, *Eustia* is sold as a single installation CD packaged with a small artbook. However, the most significant advantage the visual novel's software format has over physical media is not storage utility, but the choice/flag system. While not all visual novels utilize this system, or use it only partially, it provides complexity and replayability to the reading experience that would not be possible in a paper-and-ink book.

The choice system makes up one half of the choice/flag system. At predetermined points in the narrative, the reader will be presented with the ability to choose between several options in response to the situation, a character's question, or so on. Depending on the story and setting of the visual novel, these choices may seem insignificant or inconsequential, such as choosing whether to eat lunch in the classroom or in the cafeteria. However, these choices may have a significant impact on the flow of the narrative. Some visual novels use these choices as branching paths; choosing to eat lunch in the cafeteria may lead the main character to meet a character who does not appear at all if the reader chooses to stay in the classroom, for instance. This choice may

¹¹ *Eustia* ranks at 43rd of the listed visual novels on TLWiki.org of March 2016, with 65,489 lines of text; the longest visual novel listed is the historical fiction *ChuSinGura 46+1*, which is listed with 346,498 lines. However, TLWiki records pure line count, not character count. This ranking does not account or correct for the possibility of a high number of lines that consist entirely of '...', '!', or similar 'empty' lines. From "Eroge Script Sizes", TLWiki.org. http://tlwiki.org/index.php?title=VN/Eroge_Script_sizes

lead the reader down one set of scenes, while choosing option 2 may result in an entirely different set of scenes. Path 2 may offer access to story content and endings that Path 1 does not, lending the branching-path system an aspect of complexity – especially if Paths 1 and 2 subsequently branch off themselves. This concept can be found in print in the popular children’s *Choose Your Own Adventure* series, which provides the reader with several choices after each scene with instructions to turn to set page numbers depending on how they wish to continue – for example, ‘If you explore the abandoned mineshaft, turn to Page 4. If you keep climbing the mountain instead, turn to page 7’. However, the other half of the choice/flag system would be difficult to implement outside a software format.

The flag system tracks the reader’s choices at each choice point, generally adding +1 to a certain tracked number value when the reader makes a choice that a character approves of – in a sense, raising a ‘flag’, a term that has entered general fan parlance.¹² These flags may then determine which options a reader is permitted to choose at certain choice points, or even whether a choice is presented at all. Flags are hidden from the reader, and in visual novels with more complex organization, some experimentation may be required to find out the exact conditions required to unlock a choice. This can introduce an element of strategy or planning to one’s reading experience, as a reader reading through the novel for a second or third time may consciously make choices that seem likely to trigger these flags in order to unlock a side route that he or she missed the first time around. In visual novels with complex branching structures, careful

¹² As in the light novel and anime series *If Her Flag Breaks* (彼女がフラグをおられたら *kanojo ga furagu wo oraretara*), which focuses on a protagonist who is able to see which ‘flags’ are raised on people in the form of little banners that are invisible to everyone but him.

consideration, planning, or even the use of a flowchart may be required to reach a certain choice point with the right number of flags to unlock a specific choice.

Not all visual novels that use the flag system have complex branching paths, however. For example, *Eustia of the Tarnished Wings* features a single storyline that the reader must progress through linearly. However, at certain points, choices will be offered that minimally affect the flow of conversation or of an action; Kaim will either perform the chosen action or consider it before rethinking, after which the two dialogue paths will reconvene.¹³ These choices do not significantly alter the events of the core storyline, but choosing certain options may apply flags that will then unlock the choice point for the alternate ending of the Book – for example, making decisions that bring Kaim closer to Fione throughout Book II will allow the reader the option to pursue an alternate ending starring her, instead of the ‘true’ ending to Book II that leads into the events of Book III. However, which choices apply which flags are not always clear, requiring careful use of the save function to avoid being locked onto a path the reader did not intend to take.

¹³ See Appendix 6.

CHAPTER 2

EUSTIA OF THE TARNISHED WINGS

Eustia of the Tarnished Wings is a dark fantasy visual novel published in April 2011 by adult visual novel developer AUGUST. It is AUGUST's seventh visual novel, and the eighth published work of head writer Sakakibara Taku 榊原拓. Sakakibara made his writing debut in 2000 with *One Way Love ~ Mint's Story* (One Way Love~ミントちゃん物語, Minto-chan monogatari), the first and only work created by the dōjinshi 同人誌, or amateur publishing, group Imperial Magic Players' Troupe (王宮魔法劇団 ōkyū mahō gekidan). After a period of inactivity, in 2001 Sakakibara and other key members of the Imperial Magic Players' Troupe founded AUGUST together. Sakakibara has served as head writer for all of AUGUST's releases. The character designs for *Eustia of the Tarnished Wings* were done by the artist known as Bekkankō, a colleague of Sakakibara's from the Imperial Magic Players' Troupe and a fellow founding member of AUGUST. Like Sakakibara, Bekkankō, whose real name is unknown, has worked on every major AUGUST release; his recognizable art style and design aesthetic have led some to call him AUGUST's representative.¹⁴ Bekkankō's dōjinshi circle, Rocket Bastard (ロケット野郎, roketto yarō), remains active, most recently participating in Comics Market (Comiket) 89 in December 2015.¹⁵

¹⁴Miyamoto Naoki 宮本直毅、「「オーガスト」がブランドデビュー」”Ōgasuto ga burando debyū.”『エロゲー文化研究概論』Erogē bunka kenkyū gairon. 総合科学出版 sōgō kagaku shuppan、2013 年.

¹⁵ “べっかんこう BLOG(仮) [Bekkankō Blog (kari)].” Ameba. Accessed 28 Dec 2015. <http://ameblo.jp/bekkankou/entry-12106630138.html>

Though AUGUST has only published seven major visual novels since its inception, the company's works draw generally favorable scores and enjoy high popularity rankings among fans. On the aggregation site Visual Novel Database, all of AUGUST's visual novels¹⁶ are rated at 6.2 or above out of 10 by user input. *Eustia* is ranked in 88th place out of over 18,000 visual novels tracked on-site, again by user input.¹⁷ AUGUST's most recent release, *A Good Librarian Like A Good Shepherd* (大図書館の羊飼 い daitoshokan no hitsujikai), was adapted into an anime in the fall season of 2014 to generally positive reviews;¹⁸ a new visual novel, *Sen no Hatō, Tsukisome no Kōki* (千の刃濤、桃花染の皇 lit. *The Peach-Blossom Imperial Princess and The Thousand Blades*) is set for an as-yet unannounced release date in 2016.¹⁹

Eustia of the Tarnished Wings takes place on the floating city-state of Novus Aether, raised into the sky several hundred years ago to escape a calamity that devastated the surface world. The bedrock of the city is held together by the constant prayers of the Saint Irene, a title passed down through generations of women. Ten years ago, Saint Irene the 28th faltered in her prayers, and in an event called the Gran Forte, the Lower City district fractured in two, creating a third district of the city – the crumbling, poverty-stricken slum known as the Prison (牢獄 rōgoku). The story follows Kaim Astraea, a former assassin and cutpurse who now works as an enforcer for the crime syndicate that oversees the Prison in the absence of any support from the royal family and official city

¹⁶ “August.” Visual Novel Database. Accessed 28 Dec 2015. <https://vndb.org/p95>

¹⁷ “*Aiyoku no Eustia*.” Visual Novel Database. Accessed 28 Dec 2015. <https://vndb.org/v3770>

¹⁸ 7.05/10, ranked by 17,386 users as of 4/30/16. <
http://myanimelist.net/anime/17827/Daitoshokan_no_Hitsujikai>

¹⁹ “Sen no Hatō, Tsukisome no Kōki.” AUGUST. Accessed 1 May 2016. <http://august-soft.com/hatou/index.html>

guard. In recent years, the epidemical spread of a disease that causes people to grow wings (羽化病 ukabyō) has resulted in an atmosphere of restless paranoia throughout the city, and the violent methods of a Crown-funded paramilitary organization called the Quarantine Corps (防疫局 bōekikyoku) assigned to capture sufferers of the Feathering Disease, called Winged, has the downtrodden population frightened for their lives. Kaim, who still carries deep trauma from living through the Gran Forte when his entire family perished, stumbles upon a girl named Eustia who possesses unexplainable powers. Her dreams of being born for a “grand purpose” and the light that sometimes shines from her body push Kaim to chase after the hidden truths at the heart of the Gran Forte and the whole of Novus Aether itself.

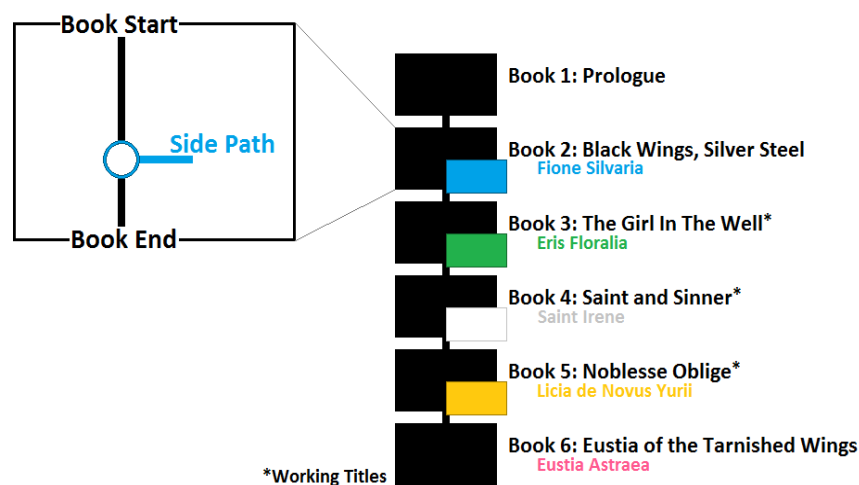
An important matter to note is that *Eustia* is marketed as an erogé (エロゲ), a netslang term derived from the English phrase ‘erotic game’. *Eroge* is a hugely popular genre of visual novel both from established producers and fan circles, and can be further divided into smaller categories such as nukige (抜きゲ) or ‘jack-off game’, referring to a game that is intended to provide easy access to sex scenes or other erotic material to facilitate masturbation. While *Eustia* contains sexual content in the form of sex scenes between Kaim and the heroine of each Book, these scenes are narratively locked, accessible only on the side routes for each Book. This may provide incentive for players to reload a save and attempt new combinations of choices in order to unlock the side routes. However, despite the use of sexual imagery on the box art, including screenshots of several censored sex scenes on the back of the box, sexual content makes up a

comparatively small amount of the novel's wordcount.²⁰ Likewise, the title of the novel itself, *Aiyoku no Eustia*, seems to promise titillation; the kanji 穢翼 for 'tarnished (or defiled) wings' is given the atypical reading *aiyoku*, a homophone for the kanji compound 愛欲, which refers to earthly desires including sexual lust. As Tia is presented as one of the most innocent characters in the novel, and in fact gives up her physical body in the novel's climax, this choice of phrasing is perplexing; however, given the atypicality of the given reading for the kanji used, the homophone must be intentional.

A. One Visual Novel, Six Books

Kaim's search for the truth regarding the Gran Forte and his slowly evolving relationship with Eustia are the threads that connect several major incidents over the course of the visual novel, which comprises six major books. Each book chronicles Kaim's involvement in incidents of unrest, intrigue and violence in Novus Aether, while advancing his search for the truth of the Gran Forte and his investigation into Eustia's prophetic dreams of calamity.

There are four
side paths in
*Eustia of the
Tarnished
Wings*,
resulting in a
total of five



Bird

Figure 4: Side paths in the narrative structure of *Eustia*

²⁰ As of May 2016, around 3,000 words of Book II's estimated 85,000.

endings for the visual novel as a whole.²¹ Each book, with the exception of the Prologue, covers an incident of grave import to the city of Novus Aether, from a rash of brutal murders of Winged in *Book II: Black Wings, Silver Steel* to Prison-wide riots against the Crown in *Book IV: Noblesse Oblige* that proceed into full-blown civil war in Book V. The circumstances of each incident result in Kaim working closely with a woman who is uniquely placed to solve or unravel the cause of the goings-on; their individual characterizations and presentation will be discussed later. In each book, the side path results in Kaim forming a romantic relationship with his partner, giving up his investigations and settling down; each side path includes two or three sex scenes between Kaim and his partner, leading up to an optimistic happy ending for the pair. However, while the side paths are proper endings, they do not resolve the troubles in Novus Aether, or tie up the remaining story threads.

The main storyline of each book involves a parting of ways between Kaim and his partner as the incidents lead them to differing answers about who they are and what they believe in. In order to delve deeper into the mysteries of Novus Aether and fulfill his and Eustia's destinies, Kaim must have faith in his partners and the validity of their beliefs, sometimes having no choice but to hurt or be hurt by those important to him. The interactivity of the visual novel format places this burden on the reader, as well; in order to reach the true ending of the visual novel, the reader must forsake the offered happy endings as Kaim does.

²¹ By very early estimate, each alternate ending is around 100 pages in length. As of March 2016, the incomplete Fione Ending is 80 pages long.

B. Characters

Over the course of *Eustia of the Tarnished Wings*, Kaim becomes involved with five women who each challenge his worldview in some way. When the reader is introduced to Kaim Astraea (voiced by Ōishi Keizō 大石けいぞう) at the beginning of the novel, he is a freelance “handyman” for the Untarnished Golden Chain (不蝕金鎖 fushoku kinsa), a crime syndicate that runs the lucrative brothel district of the Prison and maintains order in the stricken area where the Crown refuses to have any real presence. Kaim is cynical despite his young age. A child during the Gran Forte ten years ago, he was forced to turn to street crime and assassination to escape becoming a sex slave,²² and he is almost completely jaded to the human misery that surrounds him, reporting detachedly through his first-person narration on the high rates of death and drug addiction among the brothel girls, drunk and dying people in the gutters, and the brutal treatment of the Winged by the Wing Hunters. In his introductory scene, Kaim is tasked with hunting down a young man who attempted to elope with one of the Chain’s brothel girls. When he returns to the Chain’s headquarters, he watches impassively as Oz, the Chain’s head enforcer, beats the young man savagely, commenting only that he doesn’t understand the man’s sadistic streak.²³ Apathetic, casually misogynistic, and unsparingly violent when the situation demands, Kaim is a man with sharp edges, falling apart from the center out with the unhealed wound of the Gran Forte still traumatically fresh in his mind.²⁴ While the reader adopts Kaim’s literal point of view in the presentation of the visual novel, he is not a blank slate for the reader to project him- or herself onto. Kaim’s narration is

²² Appendix 2, page 63.

²³ Book I, page 6.

²⁴ See Appendix 7.

colored with his own prejudices and jaded worldview, and although much of his cynicism is shown to be justified when it comes to historical events and generalizations about the state of life in the Prison, the reader is not limited by his interpretation when it comes to events that the narration directly shows. While Kaim's point of view is given priority in his position as narrator, the early presentation of his cynicism and apathetic acceptance of violence allows the reader to separate him- or herself from Kaim, and take him as a character in his own right rather than an unbiased narrator.

While Kaim himself sees nothing wrong with his life, it is also clear to the reader that he has no real direction – nothing to strive for. That direction comes in the form of five women that Kaim meets, interacts with, and parts with over the course of the novel:

Fione Silvaria, a proud and



Figure 5: The heroines. Across the top are Saint Irene, Fione, Eris, and Licia. Eustia takes the center position.

honorable Captain struggling to reform the Wing Hunters' violent ways and bring respectability to the organization; Eris Floralia, a talented doctor living in the Brothel District who has a history with Kaim; Collette Anastasia, Saint Irene the 29th, the heart of Novus Aether's faith; Licia de Novus Yurii, the princess of Novus Aether, who leads a sheltered life in the Upper City but is fascinated with the lives her people lead below; and

the mysterious girl called Eustia, who has a grand duty to fulfill for the sake of all the people of Novus Aether. Each woman challenges Kaim and his worldview in some way, jarring him out of his stagnant cynicism and forcing him to take another look at the world and himself, and reevaluate if either is as rotten as he thinks it is. As my translation is still in progress, the character analysis in this introduction will focus on Eustia, Fione, and Eris, the three women who Kaim interacts with in the Prologue, Book I and Book II. Along with each character's story relevance, analysis will be given to their visual design, detailing how they are presented to the reader and discussing how each character's visual design informs and is influenced by their character concept.

The character who provides Kaim with the first impetus to re-examine himself, and the one whose introduction sparks the central plotline of the novel, is Eustia (voiced by Moriho Shiho 森保しほ), or Tia, an orphan who has spent most of her life as a servant and housemaid in the upper districts of the city. Brought to the Prison in a cart as part of a shipment of girls headed to the Brothel District, Tia is the only survivor of a vicious attack on the cart, and Kaim is assigned to watch over her until she regains her memories and can give the Golden Chain details about the murderer. However, Kaim has his own reasons for harboring her; Tia is Winged, and her wings sometimes glow with the same purple light that presaged the Gran Forte. She also claims to have dreams of the event, in which a voice tells her that she is fated to fulfill a grand duty. Tia's prophetic dreams and the hint that there is more to the disaster that claimed his family are the first things that shock Kaim out of his apathy, and Tia remains a significant supporting character throughout the visual novel until she takes the fore again as the heroine of Book VI.

Tia provides a strong contrast with Kaim both visually and in characterization. Kaim's only character sprite shows him as a tall man with sharp features, grey hair, and practical clothes in muted colors. He is visibly armed, and he is facing away from the camera, emphasizing his detached and cynical character presentation. Tia, on the other hand, wears decorative clothing that is brightly colored, has pink hair and bright purple eyes, and is much shorter than Kaim, a fact that he notes several



Figure 6: Kaim and Tia

times in the text. Like Kaim's posture, several elements of Tia's character design in her basic standing sprite provide hints to her characterization, from her softer eyes to her *ahoge* アホ毛, or 'idiot hair' cowlick – common visual shorthand for a character who is airheaded or clumsy, often as a form of comic relief.²⁵ While several characters have unusual hair colors, such as Siegfried's blue-black hair and Lang's light indigo, Tia's bright color profile pops against the predominantly brown and grey scenery of the Prison, highlighting her status as a newcomer who, even visually speaking, does not fit in.

Though Tia acknowledges both openly and privately that her life has been one of misfortune and suffering, she holds tightly onto her grand duty as a source of strength: "There's no doubt that [this is] preparation for my important mission.... There will be

²⁵ Azuma Hiroki identifies this as a common visual trait in 2009's *Otaku: Japan's Database Animals*. Azuma Hiroki. *Otaku: Japan's Database Animals* (Minneapolis, MN, USA: University of Minnesota Press, 2009). Print.

many hardships ahead, but I'll be alright. No matter what I go through, I won't break."²⁶

Despite this, Tia is easily the most cheerful character among the central cast, able to be delighted by simple things like pub food and a cheap necklace Kaim picks up for her at the bazaar. She believes that people are inherently good, and tries to see everything in the best possible light, to Kaim's exasperation. He initially rejects her attitude out of hand, seeing it only as a defense mechanism,²⁷ but after her death at the end of the Prologue, he acknowledges that she was something special. "You could call it purity [...]

Tia had been an unusually good person. When they're close to a strong sense of purity like that, it tends to make people realize the evil in their own hearts. Comparing themselves to her, they feel their own shame and impurity more deeply than ever before. In that sense, Tia was like a mirror, I guess. [...] I'd looked in the mirror and found something dissatisfying about myself, hadn't I? My corruption, my twistedness, all my lies... Whatever it was, I'll never know."²⁸ Tia's death causes Kaim to reflect on what he finds dissatisfying about himself, but he already knows that he will not really change; Tia's loss will pain him, but it will heal and fade in a few days.²⁹ However, shortly after he finds her body, Tia begins to glow, her wound closes, and she comes back to life right in front of him – proving to him beyond a shadow of a doubt that the world does not work the way he thought it did. With Tia's resurrection, Kaim's ill-defined thought that she might be able to explain more about the Gran Forte is solidified, and his desire to know more becomes the driving force behind the plot of the rest of the novel. While Tia

²⁶ Book I, page 356.

²⁷ See Appendix 11.

²⁸ Appendix 12, page 208.

²⁹ Appendix 12, page 209.

takes a secondary role in the books that focus on Kaim and other characters, she is always a supporting presence, and never far from Kaim's thoughts.

The heroine of Book II, *Black Wings, Silver Steel*, is Fione Silvaria (Tachibana Sakura 橘桜, who also played a major role in AUGUST's 2013 release *A Good Librarian Like A Good Shepherd* as heroine Sakuraba Tamamo³⁰), a captain of the Wing Hunters who is introduced early in the Prologue. Newly transferred to the Prison branch of the Quarantine Corps, Fione is younger than most of her subordinates and unused to the harsh conditions of life in the city's slum district. She possesses a strong sense of justice and an unwavering belief that the work of the Quarantine Corps is necessary and right.³¹ She deplores the fact that the violent reputation of the group is well deserved in the Prison, and dreams of whipping the Corps into shape as an upright and respectable organization that has earned the trust of the citizenry. Unfortunately, she has her work cut out for her; the people of the Prison distrust the Crown for its abandonment of the stricken district after the Gran Forte, and the Wing Hunters routinely shake down, intimidate and harass people as they please, knowing that they will face no disciplinary action.³² Kaim's first encounter with Fione comes early in the Prologue, and he is initially wary of her, believing that she must be exceptionally violent or cruel to have been made a Captain in the Wing Hunters despite being a woman. Instead, she prevents her Vice-Captain from detaining him on false pretenses, thanks him for his cooperation with their investigation, and leaves him bemused, unsure of how to feel about a Wing Hunter Captain who seems to truly believe in ideals of honorable conduct, transparency

³⁰ "Sakuraba Tamamo." AUGUST. Accessed 2 May 2016. <http://august-soft.com/daito/character02.html>

³¹ See Appendix 8.

³² See Appendix 5.

and respectability.³³ When she takes center stage in Book II, it quickly becomes clear that she is not the hypocritical official Kaim thinks she is. The last member of the once-proud Silvaria family, Fione joined the Quarantine Corps after the disappearance of her older brother Kuger, her hero and a former Captain of the Corps himself. She works to uphold the dignity of her family name and to make her father and brother proud, refusing to let the Quarantine Corps, the organization her family worked so hard for, sink to little more than a group of uniformed thugs.

Visually speaking, Fione's design has more in common with Kaim's than with those of the other heroines. She is the tallest of the female cast,³⁴ and is one of only two of the heroines to appear armed. Her Quarantine Corps uniform uses muted color with only a little ornamentation;



Figure 7: Fione and Kaim

the red ribbon differs from the only other shown Wing Hunter, Vice-Captain Lang, who wears a blue cravat. Fione's standard standing sprite, which is identical to the one shown to the right with the exception of her drawn sword, emphasizes her poised and attentive stance, while her straight posture visually suggests her straightforward personality and strict adherence to her code of honor.

At the beginning of Book II, Fione, in an effort to integrate the Quarantine Corps more smoothly into the Prison, requests the cooperation of the Untarnished Golden Chain

³³ See Appendix 2 for details.

³⁴ "Fione Silvaria." AUGUST. Accessed 2 May 2016. http://august-soft.com/eustia/character_05.html

in a joint investigation into a string of savage murders of Winged and uninfected humans in the Prison. She finds it hard at first to accept that Kaim's friends are largely gangsters and sex workers, at one point deeply insulting Kaim's friend Claudia by refusing to let the brothel girl buy her a drink with "money earned through the sale of flesh,"³⁵ and causing friction with Eris and Kaim by insisting on acting based on how she thinks things ought to be instead of in accordance with the realities of life in the Prison. As she continues to work with Kaim, however, she learns to adapt, meeting the people of the Prison face-to-face and starting to see the Winged as people rather than merely as mission objectives.

Even as she and Kaim grow closer, though, they begin to find disturbing clues to the true identity of the murderer – a hideously mutated Winged man called the Blackwing, who possesses inhuman strength and speed. Eventually it is revealed that the Blackwing is Fione's older brother Kuger. Betraying her ideals and her orders, Fione proposes a trade with Kaim: she will let him keep sheltering Tia, a Winged, in his house if he helps her speak with the Blackwing and help him escape capture by the Wing Hunters. In a climactic final confrontation with Kaim and Fione, Kuger regains his sanity for just long enough to tell Kaim that he was tortured and experimented on in the depths of the Quarantine Corps treatment facility, and he begs Kaim to kill him before the fast-approaching Wing Hunters can capture him and bring him back to the facility. Kaim is faced with the choice to deliver the final blow himself, or let Fione put her brother to rest. This choice point is the major juncture of Book II, and determines whether the reader continues down the main storyline or diverts onto Fione's epilogue.

³⁵ Book II, page 61.

Eris Florialia (Shinomiya Kiyomi 篠宮聖美) is the female lead of Book III, *The Girl in the Well*. A friend of Kaim's from long before the novel begins, Eris is the second major character introduced after Kaim in the Prologue, and plays a strong supporting role throughout the Prologue and Book II before taking center stage in Book III. A brilliant doctor despite her lack of formal medical education, Eris is a familiar face to every sex worker in the Prison's brothel district, many of whom pay her great respect as a competent, professional and sympathetic figure in otherwise grueling conditions. As a young woman, Eris was subjected to mental abuse by her parents before being sold off to the Golden Chain as a sex worker; when Kaim bought out her contract before she began working, she started to view him as the one she owed her life to. Kaim, wanting nothing more than for her to live her life freely and as she chooses, finds her aggressive devotion stifling, while Eris sees Kaim's rejection of her feelings as the suggestion that she is unwanted. Book III delves more deeply into their shared history and the nature of attachment and belonging, while Kaim and the Untarnished Golden Chain contend with violent incursions into their territory by the rival criminal organization Windburn (風鏑 fūshō), whose leader Bernard has some connection with Eris.

Visually, Eris's design is more outwardly feminine than Fione's or Tia's. She wears her hair the longest of the three 'central' heroines, and her outfit is more clearly focused on form than on function, with ornamentation, hair decorations, and exposed skin. Eris's outfit serves as a visual marker of her character in much the same way as Fione's uniform and straight posture do. The ornamentation, detailing, and bright colors of Eris's clothing reflects her privileged status in the Prison as a close friend and beneficiary of the head of the Golden Chain; similarly, the cool green and brown colors of her dress link her visually to the more subdued palette of the Prison when compared to the bright pinks and reds of Tia's design or the vibrant white of Saint Irene's outfit and hair.



Figure 8: Eris

Eris falls under the character archetype known as the yandere (from 病む yamu, sick or suffering, and デレ dere, meaning 'romantic' or 'love-dovey'). Yandere characters display affection toward their chosen target and act in a typically romantic way until their monopoly of their target's affections is threatened, either in reality or through paranoia, whereupon their obsessive devotion explodes into violence toward the (real or imagined) "usurper" of affection or toward their obsessive object himself. While Eris displays some of these tendencies – she is implied to have argued Kaim into letting her perform his household chores, and sometimes threatens other characters with scalpels – she never actually exhibits violence against other characters, and Book III's conflict involves her working to build self-esteem and a sense of belonging among her friends without relying entirely on

Kaim's affection, culminating in her decision to seek formal medical education and become a true doctor at the end of Book III.

C. Letting Go To Live – Choice and Sacrifice

Three of the central themes presented in the visual novel are those of choices, faith, and sacrifice – the power to choose one's own path to walk, the faith to let others do the same even if those paths diverge, and the willingness to make sacrifices to see those paths through. At the beginning of the novel, Kaim is essentially directionless – he spends his days in a routine, desensitized to the suffering around him and looking forward mostly to his nightly drinks at Violeeta. When events force him out of his routine and into interactions with each of the five main heroines, he is jarred out of his stagnant cynicism and given the opportunity to change Novus Aether, and himself, for the better – to finally do something about the conditions he had accepted as inevitable and, eventually, save the city and the people that he still loves, despite everything.

Over the course of the visual novel, Kaim's path to this ultimate end twists and turns. For much of the first Book, his sole desire is to learn more about the truth of the Gran Forte disaster. Tia's claims of fate and purpose anger him, and he rejects her beliefs out of a desire to preserve his own comfortable worldview – one that accepts the world as purposeless and unreasonable (理不尽 *rifujin*³⁶), but the idea of a purposeless world is less frightening than one that selects people, like Kaim's family, to be fated to die in terror and pain. Kaim's nihilistic certainty is shaken by irrefutable evidence that Tia has

³⁶ Appendix 4, page 113.

in fact been chosen for something extraordinary when she is resurrected in his arms, and the path he follows for much of the remainder of the novel is Tia's as they discover the secrets of the Gran Forte and the city itself.

However, the path to uncovering these secrets is not an easy one. In each Book, Kaim works closely with one of the heroines as they attempt to make sense of an incident or trouble in the city, and each heroine offers Kaim another path – a different way to see his life, and a different way to find fulfillment. In many cases, these choices are more appealing than the thought of staying on the road ahead of Kaim. Fione's choice point in Book II, for instance, gives Kaim (and the reader) the choice whether to kill Fione's brother Kuger himself, or to let Fione put him to rest. If Kaim chooses to kill Kuger himself, Fione is initially furious with him, but eventually lapses into depression, thinking back on all the people she has brought to the treatment facility – an act she recognizes as all but murdering them herself.³⁷ She refuses to return to her post with the Quarantine Corps, and Kaim, worried about what she might do in a desperate state, offers to let her stay with him for as long as she likes. After Fione delivers her resignation and sells her house, the two confess their love for each other, and Fione begins work alongside Kaim as an enforcer for the Golden Chain, protecting people from danger in a more concrete way, with her head still held high. The story ends on a happy note with the couple enjoying a surprise wedding thrown for them by their friends, and the reader, if satisfied with their choices, can have Kaim and Fione's happy ending for him- or herself.

³⁷ Book II, page 465.

In contrast, the true ending to each Book is not a happy one; if Kaim allows Fione to kill Kuger herself, events play out in much the same fashion, but Fione, even after having a final few moments with her brother as he lays dying, plunges even more deeply into depression, questioning what her life has been worth in the time she's devoted it to an organization that betrayed and tortured her family. Kaim is forced to resort to drastic measures to turn her anger and hatred outward instead of toward herself, and sacrifices their friendship by cruelly mocking her inability to carry on her brother's work and uncover the conspiracy behind the treatment facility. Humiliated and furious, Fione returns to her post with the Quarantine Corps, vowing to uncover the conspiracy and prove to Kaim that he is wrong. Given a slap on the wrist for her failure to capture the Blackwing alive, Fione remains dedicated to serving the people of Novus Aether and uncovering the truth, regardless of the sins she has to shoulder to do it. The Book ends in a shouting match between Kaim and Fione that leaves their previously flirtatious and close relationship in frigidly civil shambles.

Unhappy or ambiguous endings in stories are nothing new, but the mechanics of the visual novel medium, specifically the choice system, add an additional layer of depth to the story presentation in *Eustia of the Tarnished Wings*. No matter which choice the reader makes initially, he or she will be conscious of the other story branch; if the reader takes the happy ending path first, the unresolved story arcs will stand out along with the simple fact that there is much more left in the visual novel, while if the reader chooses the main story first, the possibility that there was a different way to resolve the situation without causing such a drastic split may remain in the back of his or her mind. Additionally, the choice mechanic makes the reader complicit in the events of the visual

novel. Choosing the side path allows the reader to experience both the happy ending to the story and the satisfaction of making the right choices to unlock the ending; choosing the main story makes the reader complicit in the emotional break between Kaim and Fione. If the reader is invested in the character of Fione or in Kaim and Fione's friendship, proceeding through the main storyline requires the reader to make a conscious choice to hurt Fione and sacrifice Kaim's chance for a happy ending with her; when she appears later in the visual novel, the reader, like Kaim, can do nothing but have faith that she is doing well on her chosen path.

This pattern of sacrifice continues throughout the visual novel. Each of the heroines' side paths give them a happy ending with Kaim, but in order to progress through the main storyline, the reader must purposely choose all the story paths that set Kaim apart from, or in some cases against, his former partners and friends. In the climactic scene of the final Book, Tia sacrifices her chance to have a life with Kaim in order to bring the city of Novus Aether down to earth safely and to purify the land around it; Kaim, while saddened by her loss, realizes as he looks out across the settled city that there will be a lot of work to be done, and sets out to find his friends, make peace with them, and start to construct a new future for the city. Upon reaching this ending, though, even the side paths' happy endings are tinged with loss in retrospect, as the collapse of the city is still imminent and, without Kaim's love, Tia's willpower is not strong enough to save the city. While Kaim may find happiness with Fione or Eris for some months, eventually the collapse will begin, and Tia will not be able to stop it.

The theme of faith, in a secular sense, is closely related to that of choice and sacrifice in the novel. When Kaim is introduced, he is intensely cynical, putting little

stock in anything and remaining disinterested and disengaged from the world around him. His first act in the novel is to scoff at a young man he's captured for attempting to escape with one of the Golden Chain's indentured sex workers as the prisoner asks for his understanding, then to watch, uninterested, as the Chain's lead enforcer, Oz, beats the young man bloody. His cynicism comes from a lack of faith – specifically in others and in the world around him. Having grown up in a pit of human misery where pragmatism bordering on cruelty is the only way to survive, Kaim is shocked and almost personally upset by people like Tia and Fione, who show almost no guile and who hold principles above their own self-interest;^{38 39} the idea of engaging with someone honestly, without cynical sniping or banter and going beyond a dry superficiality, seems foreign to Kaim as he is at the beginning of the novel. In short, he has no faith that others, if he allows them in, will not hurt him – and do so more effectively knowing his vulnerabilities. The world he lives in is much the same; Kaim takes a strange kind of comfort in the idea that the world is “senseless”,⁴⁰ a disordered place that offers no answers, and a place that will never reward curiosity, but only punish a lowered guard. His first encounter with Tia, in which he witnesses her body glowing with light the same color as the sky during the Gran Forte disaster, shakes this worldview dramatically. While he initially views her only as a possible source of information about the murders, the possibility that there may be answers to be had about the disaster that took Kaim's family from him and taught him that the world was cruel sticks with Kaim like a ‘bone in [his] throat’.⁴¹ Try as he might

³⁸ See Appendix 10, page 183.

³⁹ See Appendix 9, page 158.

⁴⁰ Appendix 4, page 113.

⁴¹ Appendix 11, page 191.

to maintain his detachment and not to believe in Tia's grand purpose, Kaim can't help but start to hope again once she resurrects in front of him.

As the events of the novel progress, Kaim makes progress toward opening up – instead of remaining closed and cynical, he connects with Tia and with the other characters, becoming more involved in their lives and showing more interest in knowing them as people. Where before he was inert, simply doing his job when told and spending most of his time and money on alcohol, Kaim's growing involvement with the people around him gives him a goal to work toward, even if that goal is murky to him. With direction comes choices to be made about who he wants to be and what he wants to do with his life, and with choices come sacrifices – the knowledge that there always could have been another option and another resolution. For the reader, this sacrifice is less burdensome than it is for Kaim – as much as the reader may empathize with Kaim on any given route, the ability to save, start over and explore another route always exists. However, the reader's emotional investment in the characters and the story is what gives these choices weight not only for Kaim but for the reader as well.

D. Eustia and the Beautiful Fighting Girl

It may be tempting to engage with the text on a more theoretical level as well, and analyze the characters with the help of an established theorist, such as noted social scholar and new media specialist Saitō Tamaki 斎藤 環; however, when looking at the female characters of *Eustia* through the lens of Saitō's most well-known theory, that of the sentō bishōjo 戦闘美少女 or 'beautiful fighting girl', the limitations of the theory are made starkly clear.

Saitō originally proposed the theory of the sentō bishōjo in his 2000 treatise on otaku sexuality, *Sentō bishōjo no seishin bunseki* 戦闘美少女の精神分析 or *Psychoanalysis of the Beautiful Fighting Girl*, and offers a psychoanalytic perspective to the popularity, and fetishization, of female characters in two-dimensional media, specifically in manga, anime and related media in the Japanese pop cultural sphere. In 2007's *Robot Ghosts and Wired Dreams*,⁴² Saitō describes the sentō bishōjo as such: “What [the male] tries to possess (e.g., the illusion of woman) is actually a stand-in for the singular *object a* that perpetually eludes his grasp. ...The object of otaku desire, the sentō bishōjo, or armored cutie, is none other than *object a*, the girl who identifies with the penis...”⁴³ In other words, the psychoanalytic theory that makes up the basis of the sentō bishōjo theory thus places the sentō bishōjo in the position of the desirer – a girl who is allowed to seek rather than strive to be sought, who seeks completion rather than to be the completion of someone else. It is this ability to desire rather than be desired that makes the sentō bishōjo, not simply the ability to do battle.

Separated from its psychoanalytical base, this is commendable, privileging women in fiction who display agency, desire and the ability to exert their desires upon the world around them. And indeed, the female main characters of *Eustia* all display desire and agency. Fione, who best fits the letter of the sentō bishōjo, desires reform for the Wing Hunters and actively works toward it; Eris desires Kaim, but her character development revolves around finding a new goal to strive for separate from him. Even Tia, who repeatedly refers to herself as worthless, eventually finds a goal that she is

⁴² Tamaki, Saitō, and Christopher Bolton. “Otaku Sexuality”. In *Robot Ghosts and Wired Dreams: Japanese Science Fiction from Origins to Anime* (University of Minnesota Press, 2009). 222–49.

⁴³ Saitō, p. 234

willing to sacrifice her life to make a reality. Whether in small, but significant acts of rebellion, such as stealing a sleeping powder to drug Kaim and run away – as Tia does near the end of Book I – or in acts as significant as taking positions as leaders on either side of the fracture when Novus Aether breaks into civil war, as Saint Irene and Fione do in Book V, the women of *Eustia* show time and again that they are forces to be reckoned with. In fact, it is Kaim, and by extension the reader, who shows little agency through most of the visual novel – generally following orders, or going along with the suggestions, requests or commands of the heroines. While Kaim and the reader make choices, in most cases the change in dialogue is negligible (sometimes occurring solely in Kaim’s mind), and most of the crucial choice points that unlock side paths are couched as Kaim following along with or negating a request from one of the heroines. By the end of the novel, he has found something to fight for, and begins to make choices for himself, as well, exercising his agency alongside the heroines.

However, the theory of the sentō bishōjo does not end with the presence of women with agency. Saitō genders the not necessarily gendered “phallus” – the agency and aspect of completeness that the sentō bishōjo nominally possesses – by explicitly and repeatedly referring to it as the ‘penis’, and argues that what truly makes the sentō bishōjo is not agency, but lack – a lack that is fundamental to women, who do not exist in Saitō’s symbolic world.⁴⁴ The complete theory of the sentō bishōjo in fact strips completeness away from these female characters who seek, granting value to the sentō bishōjo only in terms of qualities that Saitō genders as male, namely propensity for violence and skill with weaponry. Through this gendered association of violence with

⁴⁴ Saitō, p. 234

agency, what Saitō's theory privileges is masculinity and maleness, by arguing that the agency shown by female characters who fight is merely a symbolic fragment of the male reader's traumatically shattered ego – pieces that he can attempt to possess in order to approach, but never truly reach – and by discounting and dismissing agency that takes other forms that are not as culturally linked to masculinity. By presenting these female characters as merely lacking vessels for masculine qualities, defined not by what they are but by what they are not, Saitō's theory dismisses any value to be had in analyzing characters that should be among the most valuable to look closely into, creating a self-fulfilling analytical mode where women, in fact, may as well not exist.

CHAPTER 3

TRANSLATION METHODOLOGY

There is still much left to do before my translation of *Eustia of the Tarnished Wings* is complete. As of May 2016, I have completed a first draft of Book I, the Prologue; Book II, *Black Wings, Silver Steel*; and made inroads into Book III, *The Girl in the Well*, totaling nearly 140,000 words in English. Book II, with Fione's side path included, accounts for over 80,000 of those words, and it seems wise to assume that Books III-VI will end up in the same general area – putting the total word count for the novel around 500,000 words, with the Prologue at 50,000 and estimating 130,000 for the final Book. All attached excerpts are from Book I, the Prologue.

First, a note on the Books themselves. What I have chosen to call Books are narrative arcs within the visual novel that follow Kaim's involvement in a particular incident in Novus Aether, and his involvement with one of the five heroines of the novel. These Books are not technically discrete entities; they are separated within the flow of the narrative only by black screen transitions and an offer to save the reader's progress, and in this sense, dividing the visual novel into Books is an unofficial decision, done for convenience of reference. That said, the Books are narratively discrete in the manner of a novel series, dealing with specific incidents while developing an overarching plot, and thus it felt natural to approach them as books, and to give them titles.

These titles are not taken from the original text, but were chosen by me to thematically represent the events and the characters that are central to the events of that narrative arc. Thus, Book I is the Prologue; the title of Book II, *Black Wings, Silver*

Steel, makes reference to the murderous Blackwing as well as Fione's ancestral sword; Book III, *The Girl in the Well*, makes reference to Eris's unhappy past; *Saint and Sinner* and *Noblesse Oblige* refer to Saint Irene and Princess Licia, respectively, while the final Book naturally carries the name *Eustia of the Tarnished Wings*. While it may seem excessive to call the entire first Book the prologue, Tia's death and resurrection at the end of Book I are immediately followed by an animated movie that serves as a title and credits sequence for the visual novel as a whole. With this in mind, and considering that the first Book introduces almost all of the major themes and characters of the visual novel, presenting it as a Prologue – albeit one that is novel-length on its own – seemed the option that made the most sense.

My work translating *Eustia* has provided me with a number of challenges and opportunities to improve my Japanese that I would not have had the chance to experience otherwise. The text does not provide *furigana* for any kanji compounds aside from *katakana* glosses for certain terms, such as glossing 終わりの夕焼け (*owari no yūyake*, Sunset of the End Days) as トラーゲディア (*torāgedia*, Tragedia), what the people of the Prison call the purple light that shone during the Gran Forte,⁴⁵ or for archaic or complex terms that would not be well-known to the average reader.

A major challenge presented by this text, as any Japanese text, was the fact that Japanese has many different ways to express and modify formality, from self-lowering verbs and auxiliary verbs that aggrandize the listener to the use or non-use of honorifics and the various degrees of intimacy and closeness they present. In translation, English

⁴⁵ Appendix 3, page 5.

verbs simply cannot be conjugated with the same degree of precision and social meaning as Japanese verbs. Some constructions map well to English adverbial or prepositional constructions – for instance, some self-humbling speech (謙譲語, kenjōgo) can be adequately expressed by the adverbial ‘I *humbly* obey/inform/receive’ construction (承る / 申し上げる / 頂く), etc., and the auxiliary verb くれる *kureru*, for showing gratitude for something someone has done for you (e.g., 片付けてくれる *katazukete kureru*), can often be expressed with the addition of ‘for me’ (as in, ‘thanks for cleaning up *for me*’). However, other auxiliary verbs, such as the archaic honorific 給う *tamau*, or しまう *shimau*, used to express that something has been done completely, accidentally or regrettably, cannot often be translated into natural-sounding speech simply by translating or modifying the verb and must instead be taken as a ‘sense’ that informs the whole of the sentence or conversation. For an example of this, take Kaim’s narration of Eris opening the door for the visiting Siegfried and Melt in Appendix 4, page 102. Kaim’s sentence 開けてやがった *akete yagatta* modulates the verb 開ける *akeru*, to open, with the auxiliary verb やがる *yagaru*, which expresses disgust, dislike or contempt. Translating this sentence with a modulation of contempt to the verb would be possible (“She *fucking opens* [the door]”), but requires a strong expletive that overpowers the general mood of the scene, which is Kaim’s exasperated acceptance of Siegfried’s antics and Eris’s playing along, and colors Kaim’s presented view of Eris with undue hostility. In order for Kaim to show both exasperation and fondness, the modulation has to be shifted somewhere else to allow for a gentler take – in this case, by restructuring the sentence to shift focus on the opened door letting Siegfried in as opposed to Eris opening the door (“And she lets the bastard in”, in my translation) and using the context of

Kaim's previous interactions with Sieg, and the comedic nature of the scene, to let the reader know that 'bastard' is at least partially affectionate. In the first draft of this translation, the sentence read "And she lets the fucker in", but I was worried that, as above, too strong an expletive would overpower the intended emotional timbre of the scene.

Accepting that I would not be able to faithfully and consistently match every different combination of these modes employed by various characters one-to-one with equivalent English modes and conjugations allowed me to focus on emphasizing the various characters' personal voices, particularly Kaim's and those of the female lead characters. Saint Irene and Princess Licia, by virtue of their stations, make only limited appearances in the Prison, but Kaim, Tia, Fione and Eris spend much of the Prologue, Book II and Book III interacting closely; their dynamics with each other are integral to the scenes of social interaction that tie each book together. Providing the reader with a clear, consistent and entertaining interplay between the main characters, and keeping an accurate sense of the emotional subtext, was my priority in translating these scenes.

Adding another layer of complexity to *Eustia*'s translation is the setting. Novus Aether is part of a fantasy world, and is not explicitly identified as representative of any real-world culture; most importantly, there are no hints of Japanese culture present aside from



Figure 9: Western architecture and clothing

allusions to a large social bath in Liliūm, the Untarnished Golden Chain's central brothel. The characters' outfits and weapons appear generally Western in design, and the architecture of Novus Aether, when shown, is vaguely European. Many characters' names are European in origin (Siegfried, Fione/Fiona, Licia) while others refer to Biblical figures or prominent Christian saints (most directly Saint Irene of Thessalonica,⁴⁶ or perhaps another Saint Irene), and the nobility of the Upper City, when shown, utilizes the titles of the Japanese peerage 華族 *kazoku* system established in 1869 during the Meiji Restoration.⁴⁷ Likewise, the presence of a King (王 *ō*) rather than an Emperor (天皇 *tennō*) and the separation of the mechanisms of political and religious power place Novus Aether firmly in a European social mode rather than a Japanese one.

The end result is a world that is entirely non-Japanese in culture and presentation, but still described through the lens of the Japanese language. The largest problem presented by this juxtaposition was the use of honorifics, which are used to express social hierarchy, familiarity, and seniority, among other complex information. While I am a proponent of letting honorifics stand in works set in Japan or in a Japanese cultural mode, the European presentation of Novus Aether's culture meant that honorifics, though rarely used, would stand out if left in the original Japanese (e.g., 'Kaim-*san*, would you like eggs for breakfast?'). Instead, I decided to translate the honorifics with English honorifics appropriate to the characters' relationships where natural to do so, primarily 'mister' or 'miss', or in the case of the sex workers, 'sir' or 'lady' when addressing a

⁴⁶ "St. Irene, Greatmartyr, of Thessalonica." The Self-Ruled Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America. Accessed 2 May 2016. <http://www.antiochian.org/node/18346>

⁴⁷ Lebra, Takie Sugiyama. *Above the Clouds: Status Culture of the Modern Japanese Nobility*. Berkeley: U of California, 1993. Print.

social superior.⁴⁸ In the case of ちゃん, a diminutive and familiar honorific used primarily for younger girls (in the text, almost exclusively used by characters speaking to Tia), the sense-modulation approach made more sense, presenting the characters as speaking fondly or gently to Tia, as there are no equivalent titles in English.

A particular challenge posed by *Eustia* is the characters' opinions on, and ways of speaking about, the thriving prostitution business the Golden Chain runs. Five named characters – Eris, Melt, Claudia, Risa, and Iris – are former or current sex workers, and Siegfried and Kaim live in or very near the brothel district and are closely involved with the Chain's indentured women. Kaim and Siegfried generally refer to them as simply onna 女, or women, leaving their meaning to be inferred by context;⁴⁹ I most often translate this as 'girls', to enforce the generally familiar and in some cases dismissive attitude the men take toward the sex workers. Kaim holds no ill will toward the women the Golden Chain has indentured, and is in fact popular in the brothel district due to his good looks and his skill at defending them from violent patrons; that said, he is almost entirely desensitized to the conditions the women face, and gives them no leeway to forget the reality of their situation, reminding Claudia, Risa and Iris that their looks are their trade goods⁵⁰ and reacting only with mild distaste when Oz, Siegfried's second-in-command, invites him to help "discipline" a sex worker who attempted to elope with a customer.⁵¹ Melt and Eris prefer the term ko 子, for 'girl' or 'child', for the brothel district's workers. As women who have experienced and escaped the life of a brothel

⁴⁸ 様 sama. See Appendix 5.

⁴⁹ See Appendix 5, page 6. (どうやら、女に絡みただけのようだ。)

⁵⁰ Book I, page 262.

⁵¹ Book III, page 35.

worker, they take a pragmatic view of the realities of life in the Prison and are never less than honest with the indentured women who speak to them, but where Kaim and Siegfried use ‘girl’ as a means of diminishing the sex workers, Melt and Eris use it as a term of closeness and sympathy, if not comfort. These differing views must inform the characters’ bearings and ways of speaking when discussing topics related to the sex trade, the brothels, or the indentured sex workers themselves. This includes Fione, who as discussed above is initially disgusted as much by the sex workers themselves as by their trade or the existence of the brothels, but who warms to the women, if not their occupation, by the end of Book II.

As discussed above, maintaining consistent and clear individual voices for the main characters was a major concern during my translation process. In particular, as the main character and the narrator, Kaim’s narrative voice colors almost every event the reader experiences over the course of the novel. The infrequent exceptions are short segments called ‘Another View’ (the English term is used⁵²), in which the narration switches to either uncharacterized third-person narration, signified by a green text box as opposed to Kaim’s default black, or to Tia’s first-person narration, signified by a pink text box. Thus, one of the first and most important steps I had to take when I started translating the novel was to find Kaim’s voice, and find a consistent and appealing way to adapt that voice to English text.

While the characters’ names are presented in katakana in the novel itself, supplementary material (the website, accompanying artbook, and opening movie) also

⁵² Appendix 4, page 114.

present the characters' names in Romanized script. I have maintained these spellings in all cases, with the exception of Kaim's name. The official spelling given for his name is Caim, but I found that when presented with this spelling, most English-native readers took the pronunciation to be identical to 'came' (IPA: keɪm) rather than rhyming with 'I'm' (IPA: kaɪm). Spelling his name with a K makes the pronunciation more intuitive to those familiar with Japanese kana, and in conjunction with the voice-acting, should prove easily understandable to non-experienced readers as well.

Kaim uses familiar or dictionary-form Japanese almost exclusively.⁵³ He is short with almost everyone, particularly his old friends Siegfried and Eris,⁵⁴ and is often cynically laconic; when pushed, that cynicism can turn to sharp words quickly.⁵⁵ Despite this, Kaim has a charisma that other characters often point out. Tia insists that Kaim is a good person despite his protests otherwise; Sieg and Eris both engage in bantering verbal sparring with him, and Melt the pub owner takes great pleasure in teasing him in his surlier moods. Despite his cultivated prickly exterior, Kaim does care for his friends quite a bit. My aim was to maintain both aspects of Kaim's personality in the text without glossing over his crueler moments or shortchanging his kindnesses, in order to emphasize his characterization as a good man who has been all but inured to hope. Choosing words and phrasing to match his harshness without going too far was a challenge, but using casual, colloquial speech such as 'gonna' and 'kinda', and dropping the first words of some sentences,⁵⁶ provided a suitable way to express Kaim's laid-back

⁵³ With the brief exception of a meeting with the Upper City noble Lord Lucius at the end of Book II, when he switches to a respectful speech mode.

⁵⁴ Appendix 4, page 2; pages 7-8.

⁵⁵ Appendix 7.

⁵⁶ See Appendix 1, page 2, particularly 'Guess there's no choice but to hope that he's still around' (まだここにいることに賭けるしかないな。)

and detached attitude while also keeping his narration readable and inviting. I made a conscious effort to restrict his profanity to interjections, to indicate Kaim's emotional detachment from his day-to-day life and to reserve a separate level of intensity for cases of extremely aggressive, rude or threatening speech – generally from unnamed or side characters rather than Kaim himself.⁵⁷ Kaim uses much the same voice in his first-person narration as when speaking; however, his narration also tends to be introspective or contemplative, using more advanced vocabulary and hiding less behind his façade of detachment. Shifting between Kaim's laconic speech and his wordier narration felt surprisingly fluid, and both modes of his speech inform the reader of the other. Kaim's intelligence and nuanced grasp of events in *Novus Aether* are made clear in his narration, making his laconic speech more clearly emblematic of his detachment and disinterest in day-to-day business, while his casual speech tone prevents his narration and background information from sounding didactic, and reminds the reader that Kaim has his own biases.

This two-layered system can be used to great effect for characters other than Kaim, as well. The first switch to Tia's narration occurs after a scene where Kaim and the other discuss what to do with the amnesiac Tia, who may have information they need about the attack on her cart.⁵⁸ The switch to Tia's "Another View" reveals that Tia, who until then has been presented as a confused and guileless girl by Kaim's narration, is not only feigning sleep to listen in on the conversation, but is clearly aware that her survival hinges on her ability to keep pretending that she does not remember what happened.

⁵⁷ See Appendix 5.

⁵⁸ Appendix 4.

Tia's calmer, more mature inner narration – the only time she does not reflexively diminish herself in front of someone she believes is her superior – provides another layer to her characterization, one that was vital to preserve in English.

Most of the characters are native to the Prison, and the Untarnished Golden Chain's brothel district in particular; characters that use the polite *desu/masu* form of standard Japanese (標準語 *hyōjungo*) are in the minority, many of them visitors from the Lower or Upper City, and I made an effort to organically preserve this distinction in diction in English. The close-knit nature of Kaim's social circle, consisting of people he has known for years, lent itself well to this casual intimacy; when characters intrude upon this closeness, they are marked as intruders not only in terms of their social origins but by their linguistic habits as well. Tia in particular speaks deferentially to Kaim and his friends, a remnant of her upbringing as a maidservant in abusive Lower City households, and even after she is accepted into their social circle, her grammar remains respectful, an element that sets her apart textually as well as narratively.

Fione, like Tia, is marked as an outsider to the Prison by her speech, but in a different way. While Fione uses dictionary-form Japanese like most of the cast, she speaks authoritatively and confidently, favoring *kanji* compounds over 'softer' words – using 感謝する *kansha suru* (lit. 'I am grateful') rather than ありがとう *arigatō* for gratitude, for instance. Fione does not use the feminine role language particle *わ*, which is generally used to signify high class, mature or refined feminine beauty, or gentleness in bearing; her speech is as straightforward and functional as she is, and reflects both her position of authority and her unbending sense of honor and propriety. Her forthrightness and unwillingness to compromise, initially even on anything as simple as calling the

Prison ‘the Prison’ (牢獄 rōgoku) and not the Specially Designated Disaster Area (特別被災地区 tokubetsu hisai chiku), or that the Quarantine Corps (防疫局 bōekikyoku) should not be referred to as Wing Hunters (羽狩り hanegari), are large parts of her character, and cause conflict between her and the Prison natives; it was important to preserve these insistent qualities throughout her speech. What I settled on was a mixture of formality and informality in English; unlike Kaim, Fione uses proper grammar at all times and favors higher-level vocabulary, but she also uses contractions, reflecting her slightly awkward attempts to break free of her regimented upbringing and fit in with Kaim’s social group.

Eris is a longtime friend of Kaim’s, and holds a considerable amount of influence with Siegfried and the Golden Chain due to her skills as one of the only medically trained people in the Prison. She generally uses casual, femininely marked Japanese, concealing a sharp tongue behind traditionally softening speech patterns and a sweet tone of voice; while she is deeply in love with Kaim, she almost never holds back from insulting him if she disapproves of his behavior. Appropriately, Eris’s speech pattern fits the pattern identified for the yandere archetype by anime blogger Actar,⁵⁹ marked both with elements of femininely-coded speech and with a casual or blasé attitude toward pain, violence or death. Some elements of Eris’s speech habits were lost in the translation from Japanese to English, as English lacks a femininely-coded speech mode that would be appropriate for the setting and character; however, I believe it was more proper to maintain her attitude and bearing than to attempt to force a speech mode that would

⁵⁹ “Actar’s Reviews.” Wordpress. Accessed 2 May 2016. <https://actar.wordpress.com/2014/07/18/role-language-of-yandere-characters-in-anime/>

ultimately misrepresent her character. In this respect, Eris's dialogue relies more than some other characters' on her voice acting; with the loss of feminine coding in the transition from Japanese to English and the importance of Eris's sweet tone and soft delivery to her character, hearing her voice acting is essential.

The visual novel is an exciting and vibrant new medium that, despite taking elements of presentation from some of the most powerful media in Japanese and international pop culture, continues to carve its own economic and cultural niche in the Japanese anime culture sphere, even exerting notable influence on established media such as light novels, anime, and video games. While less interactive overall than a video game, the visual novel's suite of options to give readers control over the speed and even course of the narrative allows for complex branching narratives, choice systems that make the reader complicit in the events that unfold, and incentives to read and explore different branches of the story make the visual novel one of the most complex and engaging narrative media formats available. *Eustia of the Tarnished Wings* serves as a strong example of the involved plotlines and integrated visual/narrative design that visual novels can display, and provides complex character voices that require careful attention to detail to accurately and entertainingly portray in English. While the visual novel may be a young medium, it seems safe to say that it will remain a significant presence in Japanese pop culture for years to come.

APPENDIX 1

THE SAINT'S VISITATION (Act 1, p. 15-20)

Eustia of the Tarnished Wings is set on the floating city of Novus Aether, high above the ground below. Originally divided between the Upper City and the Lower City, a disaster that occurred ten years ago known as the Gran Forte caused a large section of the Lower City to collapse and fall, and a further section to settle even below Lower City – a stricken, poverty-ridden slum now known as the Prison. A syndicate known as the Untarnished Golden Chain oversees the Prison from the large brothel district, but rampant crime and poverty keep the Prison in a constant state of desperation. In addition, a highly contagious disease that causes the afflicted to sprout wings before death is spreading throughout the Prison; the official Quarantine Corps assigned to take in the sufferers are known as the Wing Hunters, and are feared for their corrupt conduct and brutal methods.

In this excerpt from early in Book 1, the protagonist Kaim Astraea, an ex-assassin and close friend of the head of the Golden Chain, pursues a young cutpurse who has stolen money from the syndicate. On the way he passes a visitation by Saint Irene, the religious leader of the city.



Kaim:

「想像通りだな……」

Just as expected...

The Prison's largest plaza is so packed with people that you can't see the ground.

It's a ridiculous number of people, no matter how rare blessings from the Saint herself are.

Naturally, the kid's nowhere to be seen.

He's probably trying to throw off pursuit in the crowd.

If he's already left the plaza, there's no chance of finding him again.

Guess there's no choice but to hope that he's still around.

First order of business is to find a better vantage point.

From there, I'll be able to see anything that happens in the crowd at a glance.

The crowd is seething with excitement.

牢獄最大の広場は、地面が見えないほどの人で溢れている。

聖女に祈りを捧げるためとはいえ、よくもこれだけの人が集まるものだ。

当然のように、逃げた子供は見当たらない。

群衆の中に紛れているのだろうか。

すでに広場から離れているのなら、さすがに発見は難しい。

まだここにいることに賭けるしかないな。

まずは、見晴らしの良い場所に移動する。

ここから、群衆の変化が一目で分かるだろう。

広場が沸き立った。



About the same time as I reach my vantage point, a figure appears on the terrace above.

Excited voices swell up from the plaza.

Unfortunately for the hopes of the people below, it's a middle-aged priest.

Smiling tightly, the priest fixes the collar of his ceremonial robe.

Priest:

Before you are graced with our Saint's presence, I urge you, the people of the Prison, to recall once again how our city of Novus Aether came to be.

He launches into the usual dull sermon.

Everyone in this city has heard the story countless times since the day they were born.

Long, long ago, God gifted the world with Angels from on high.

Humankind thrived using the power of the Angels, and spread across the land.

While people remembered to give thanks to God for his gifts, they prospered, but as they grew forgetful, God became wroth and withdrew his Angels to Heaven.

As a result, the world was enveloped in chaos.

In the midst of the catastrophe, a pious Saint begged God for forgiveness.

God forgave the Saint and her followers, and lifted their city into the sky, saving their lives.

視線を上げたのと、テラスに人影が現れたのはほぼ同時だった。

罵声が飛ぶ。

だが、周囲の期待に反して、姿を見せたのは中年の神官だ。

神官は、笑顔を引きつらせながら式服の襟を正す。

「ご尊顔を拝する前に、牢獄の方々には、この《ノーヴァス・アイテル》の成り立ちを再度思い起こして欲しい」

これからしばらくは、恒例の退屈な話だ。

生まれてこの方、嫌と言うほど聞かされてきた。

遥か大昔、この世界は神が天使を遣わして作ったという。

人間は天使の力を借り、大いに繁栄した。

人々が神に感謝の祈りを捧げているうちはよかったのだが、それを忘れたとたん、神は機嫌を損ねて天使を引き上げさせてしまったらしい。

その結果、世界は混沌の濁流に呑み込まれてしまった。

多くの人間が死んで行く中、敬虔な聖女が神に許しを請う。

神は聖女と、彼女の信者を許し、都市を浮かせて命を救った。

That was Novus Aether.

That's the whole story right there, but the priest takes plenty of time reeling it out.

Priest:

Saint Irene the First, blessed be her name, with her noble prayer lifted our city of Novus Aether high into the sky, protecting those who would become our gracious ancestors.

Looks like he's wrapping up.

Priest:

That was many centuries ago. Now, the blessed power of the First resides within our very own Saint Irene, who keeps this fair city held up above the clouds.

Priest:

This city is the final sacred bastion of humanity, protected by the Saint herself, and we are her chosen followers.

Priest:

Offer your gratitude, and your prayers, to the blessed Saint Irene!

The dazzling sound of trumpets reverberates through the plaza.

A hush spreads out across the bustling plaza.

Above the crowd,

Atop the terrace, taking the priest's place, four palace guards appear.

They split up into teams of two without hesitation, moving to the left and right sides of the terrace.

それがここ、《ノーヴァス・アイテル》だ。

たったこれだけの話を、神官はたっぷり時間をかけて語っていた。

「初代聖女イレヌ様は、その崇高なる祈りのお力で《ノーヴァス・アイテル》を空に浮かせ、我々の祖先をお救い下さいました」

おっさんの話が佳境に入る。

「それから数百年。初代様のお力は代々の聖女イレヌ様に引き継がれ、この街を空へ留めて下さっています」

「この都市は聖女様に守られた人類最後の聖域であり、我々は選ばれし信仰の徒なのだ」

「聖女イレヌ様に、感謝、そして祈りを！」

喇叭の華やかな音が響き渡った。

喧噪に満ちていた広場に、静寂が広がっていく。

群衆の視線の先、

テラスには、神官と入れ替わりで4人の衛兵が出てきた。

彼らは、淀みない動きで左右二つに別れ、テラスの両端へと移動する。

Not paying any attention to the guards, the crowd holds its breath as one, searching.

The plaza is silent; not even a whisper can be heard.

The only sounds are the cries of the birds flying overhead.

In just moments, the Saint herself will appear.

The woman who keeps the city flying – a presence that can silence even the people of the Prison, so far removed from her devotees.

面白くもない衛兵の流れを、皆が息を飲んで見つめている。

もう、物音を発する人間はいない。

聞こえるのは、遥か上空を旋回する鳥の声だけだ。

間もなく、聖女が現れる。

この街を浮かべ、信仰とは縁遠い牢獄の人間すら黙らせるほどの存在が。



この街を浮かべ、信仰とは縁遠い牢獄の人間すら黙らせるほどの存在が。

My throat suddenly dry, I swallow, and then,

From within the pitch blackness of the terrace, a single light shines.

It grows slowly brighter, until I suddenly realize that what looks like light is simply the pure white of a ceremonial robe.

唾液を飲み込んだその時、

テラス奥の漆黒に、一つの光が生まれた。

それは徐々に大きくなり、光と見えたのは純白の聖式服だったことに気づく。

No, it's not just the robe that's white.

Her skin, her hair – everything about her shines with holy white light.

She is...

Saint Irene, the Twenty-Ninth.

いや、白いのは聖式服だけではない。

その肌も、髪も、彼女のすべてが清冽な白光を纏っていた。

—あれが、

—第29代、聖女イレヌ。



The Blind Saint steps out into the sunlight.

Droplets of light sparkle in her hair as it blows in the wind.

Her shoulders and arms, left bare by her robe, are so pale she looks almost ethereal.

The finest sculptor in history wouldn't be able to recreate her features, her demurely closed eyes.

《盲目の聖女》が、陽光の下へと進み出た。

風に揺れる髪の上を、光の粒が軽やかに転がる。

聖式服に隠されていない肩と腕は、人の手を拒むかに透き通っていた。

慎ましく双眸を閉じた容顔は、最高級の彫刻師が命を賭しても掘り出せるかどうか。

She's too bright a being for this Prison, sunk deep into greed and desire.

The Saint slowly draws breath.

Saint:

For as long as we offer our thanks and praise, God shall save and protect us.

Saint:

Raise your voices with mine in prayer.

The plaza shakes with shouts of joy.

Without acknowledging the people's voices at all, the Saint faces the plaza with her eyes still serenely closed.

It's a little chilly, but it's much preferable to her smiling and waving like an idiot.

She holds the fates of this city, and everyone living in it, in her hands, after all.

I'd much rather she concentrate on keeping us in the sky than mug for the crowd.

That, and preventing another Gran Forte.

The disaster ten years ago.

The memories I have of it are murky at best, but trying too hard to remember makes my chest start to hurt.

Kaim:

...

I get the feeling that looking at the Saint any longer will stir up things better left forgotten.

情念と欲望に満ちたこの牢獄に、彼女は眩しすぎる。

聖女が、ゆっくりと息を吸う。

「感謝と祈りを忘れぬ限り、神は我々をお救い下さいます」

「私とともに、祈りを捧げましょう」

広場が歓声に震えた。

聖女は人々の声に応えるでもなく、静かに閉じられた目を広場へ向けている。

冷たい気もするが、馬鹿みたいな笑顔で手を振られるよりはよっぽどいい。

彼女は、この街と、この街に生きる人間の運命を握っているのだ。

人気を取ることで、街を浮かせ続けることに全力を尽くして欲しい。

《大崩落》を繰り返さないためにも。

10数年前の悲劇。

俺の中にある記憶はひどく曖昧だが、思い出すたびに不快感が胸をよぎる。

「.....」

これ以上、聖女を見ていると余計なことまで思い出してしまいそうだ。

Woman's Voice:

Kyaaaaaa?!

Among the joyful shouts, there's one that doesn't belong.

Loud Female Visitor:

A W-Winged?!

Middle-Aged Visitor:

Hey, someone call the Wing Hunters!

A ring of space forms in the middle of the crowd.

In the middle of that ring is a young boy.

That's the pickpocket, huh.

Scrawny-Looking Visitor:

Stay the fuck away from us! What if it spreads?!

Tough-Looking Visitor:

Get the hell out of here, brat!

The boy, who had been standing dumbfounded for a moment, takes off running like he was shot from a bow.

The crowd splits and pulls back from him, making a sort of path.

Kaim:

Well, then...

Time to get to work.

With the boy's appearance sharp in my mind, I take off running too.

It's a great piece of luck to have found him this fast.

「——っ!？」

歓声に異質な声が混じった。

「は、羽つきよっ!？」

「おい、誰か羽狩りを呼べっ」

群衆の中に、ぽっかりと円形の空白地帯が生まれた。

円の中心にいるのは、一人の少年。

掏摸はあいつか。

「てめえ近づくんじゃねえ。伝染ったらどうする」

「さっさと失せろ、このガキっ」

周囲を見回し、一瞬呆然とした少年は、事態を察し弾かれたように走り出した。

進行方向の群衆が割れ、道ができていく様はちょっとした見物だ。

「さて」

ひと仕事しよう。

少年の特徴を目に焼き付け、俺も走り出す。

こんなに早く見つかるとは、かなりの幸運だ。

I'll raise a glass or two for the Saint at the bar tonight.

聖女に乾杯しなくちゃならないな。

As I run, I turn back to the terrace and mutter a few quiet words of thanks.

走りながらテラスに目をやり、胸の中で祈りの言葉を唱えた。

APPENDIX 2

THE WING HUNTERS (Act 1, p. 23-37)

Kaim pursues the young thief deep into the slums, where the boy hopes to lose him. Unfortunately, Kaim isn't the only one chasing the boy; the Quarantine Corps, a special military unit formed to find and impound sufferers of the Feathering Sickness, are also after him.



From the arrhythmic beat of the Winged boy's footsteps, I can tell he's exhausted.

I doubt he expected to be exposed while I was still on his tail.

This time when the boy looks back, a faint look of relief crosses his face. He puts his hands on his knees.

Kaim:

Good try, kid.

I step out of the alleyway where I'd hidden myself.

Winged Boy:

羽つきの少年の乱れた足音からは、疲労が窺えた。

俺に先回りされているとは、露ほども思っていないのだろう。

少年はせわしげに背後を振り返ると、微かな安堵の表情を浮かべ、膝に手をついた。

「ご苦労さん」

隠れていた横合いの路地から姿を現す。

「ひっ!？」

Ah?!

Kaim:

Not a bad idea, running into the slums.

Winged Boy:

A-are you... a Wing Hunter?

Kaim:

Nope.

Winged Boy:

C-come on... don't scare me like that, you asshole!

The spirit comes back to the boy's face.

Kaim:

Well, I'll apologize for scaring you, at least.

Kaim:

In return, I'd like the cash you stole from the bar.

Winged Boy:

Cash? What're you talking about?

He plays dumb, but his hand goes to his waist.

Probably hiding a knife or something, I would guess.

This kind of kid can be more dangerous than an adult.

In fact, there are kids who use their seeming innocence as a weapon, and sell their services as assassins.

I used to be one of them.

Kaim:

「スラムに逃げるってのは悪くないアイデアだ」

「お、お前、羽狩りか」

「違う」

「な、なんだ.....てめえ、驚かせんじゃねえよ」

少年の表情に生気が戻った。

「驚かせたのは謝る」

「その代わり、店から盗んだ金を出してもらおう」

「金？何のことだ？」

とぼけた顔をしているが、その手は腰に伸びている。

刃物でも隠しているのだろう。

この手の子供は半端な大人より質が悪い。

むしろ、子供であることを武器に殺しを商売にしている奴もいるくらいだ。

かつての俺がそうだったように。

「腰のものなら、後ろに落としたぞ」

If you're looking for your knife, you dropped it just now.

Winged Boy:

「えっ？」

Eh?

In the instant the boy's expression changes:

少年が表情を変えたその一瞬、

Winged Boy:

「ぎゃっ」

Guh!

I kick him in the face.

横っ面を蹴り飛ばす。

As the boy lands on his face, I take the small knife still hanging at his hip.

うつ伏せに倒れた少年の腰から、
小さなナイフを取り上げる。

Winged Boy:

「く……クソ野郎が」

Y...you son of a bitch...!

Kaim:

「……」

Tsk.

I grab him by the hair and haul him up, making him wince in pain.

髪を掴み上げ、むりやり顔を起こした。

Kaim:

「盗んだ金を出せ」

Give back the money you stole.

Winged Boy:

「何のこと……ぐっ」

What are you talking about- gh!

Before he can finish the sentence, his face meets the ground a second time.

言い終わる前に、ガキの頭を地面に叩きつける。

Winged Boy:

「お、俺が盗ったんだ……手前になんか、やるかよっ」

I-I stole it fair and square... like hell I'd give it to you, asshole!

I dodge the saliva he spits at me.

飛ばしてきた唾をかわす。

The next time I yank his face up from the ground, his nose is bleeding.

もう一度顔を地面に叩きつけると、鼻血がどっと溢れた。

Kaim:

「なかなか気が強いじゃないか」

You're a feisty one, aren't you.

Kaim:

「だが、よく聞け」

But listen up, kid.

Kaim:

「お前が盗んだ金、あれは《不蝕金鎖》への上納金だ」

The money you stole? That money belongs to the Untarnished Golden Chain.

Kaim:

「しかも、金を持ってた女はジークが昔から面倒を見ている女だぞ」

Not to mention, the woman you stole from has been under Sieg's personal protection for a long, long time.

Winged Boy:

「ジーク？」

Sieg?

Kaim:

「こう言えばわかるか？《不蝕金鎖》の頭だよ」

Maybe you know him by another name? The head of the Untarnished Golden Chain.

Winged Boy:

「え？え？そんな……」

Wh...what? No way...

Now that he finally understands the situation, the boy's body begins to quake.

ようやく事態が飲み込めたのだろう、少年の身体が震えだす。

Kaim:

「もう一度聞くが、金はどこだ？」

I'm gonna ask one more time... where's the money?

Winged Boy:

「は、はいっ、はいっ。懐に入ってます」

Y-ye-yessir! I-it's in the bag!

I pat him down and find a surprisingly heavy leather bag.

懐を探ると、ずしっと重い革袋が出てきた。

Kaim:

「使い込んでないだろうな」

I'm not gonna find any missing, am I?

Winged Boy:

「は、はいっ」

N-no sir!

I get off the boy.

Winged Boy:

U-um, are you a member of the Golden Chain, sir...?

Kaim:

I guess.

Winged Boy:

Then please, help me! I'll do anything!

Kaim:

Sorry, I'm not big on helping people.

Winged Boy:

Anything... I'll do anything, please...

The boy stretches out his hands, entreating me.

Winged Boy:

I've lived my entire life in the Lower City.

Winged Boy:

But suddenly, somehow I'd caught the Feathering Sickness... and there were wings sprouting out of my back...

Winged Boy:

I was chased out of the store I lived and worked in, and I had no choice but to come to the Prison!

Winged Boy:

I was so hungry I didn't know what to do, and that's... that's why I stole the money...

With blood dripping down his face, the boy recounts his story to me.

少年の身体を離してやる。

「あ、あの、あなたは《不蝕金鎖》の方なんですか？」

「まあな」

「だったら、何でもしますから助けて下さいっ」

「悪いが、人助けの趣味はない」

「何でも.....何でも、しますから.....」

少年は、懇願しながら俺に手を伸ばす。

「ボク、ずっと下層で育ったんです」

「でも、いつの間にか羽化病にかかったみたいで.....背中に羽が生えてきて.....」

「住み込みで働いてたお店から追い出されて、牢獄に来るしかなかったんです」

「お腹が空いてどうしようもなくて、それで、お金を盗みました」

血と涙で顔をぐしゃぐしゃにしな
がら、少年は身の上を語る。

Winged Boy:

I've never done anything wrong in my life...
so why... why did this happen...?

Kaim:

Who knows?

Winged Boy:

Uuh... wh-what's going to happen to me now?

Kaim:

I'm going to take you to headquarters.

Winged Boy:

N-no...!

Kaim:

Or rather, that'd be the plan if you weren't
Winged, but...

Kaim:

No one there's stupid enough to invite a
Winged in.

Winged Boy:

Then... will you let me go?

Kaim:

You're going to take proper responsibility.

I kick the boy in the face.

I don't like getting violent with children, but
consequences are consequences.

If people don't understand what it means to lay
hands on money that belongs to the Golden
Chain, we're going to have problems.

Kaim:

If we'd gone down to headquarters, they'd
have taken an arm.

「ボク、何も悪いことしてないの
に.....何で.....こんなことに
.....」

「さあな」

「うっ.....ぐすっ.....これから、
ボク、どうなるんですか？」

「組織に連れて行く」

「そ、そんな」

「ま、お前が、羽つきじゃなかつ
たらの話だったが」

「組織も、羽つきを家にご招待す
るほど馬鹿じゃない」

「じゃあ、見逃してくれるんです
か？」

「けじめはつけさせてもらう」

少年の横面を蹴り飛ばす。

子供に暴力を振るうのは気が進ま
ないが、けじめはけじめだ。

《不蝕金鎖》の金に手を出すこと
がどういうことか、わかってもら
わないと困る。

「組織の制裁なら、腕の一本は覚
悟しなければならぬところだ」

Kaim:

Today's your lucky day.

Winged Boy:

Guh... y-yessir...

Kaim:

Get lost.

The boy stands on shaky legs.

Still facing me, he takes one or two steps back, and:

Winged Boy:

Thank you so much.

He rushes the words, then turns away.

I wonder how far he'll be able to run from the Wing Hunters.

...Probably not very far.

Winged Boy:

Gah?!

The boy, who had tried to run down another alley, makes a sound like he's run into a wall.

「運がよかったな」

「う.....あ、はい.....」

「失せろ」

よろよろと立ち上がる少年。

俺に正対したまま、一歩二歩と後ずさり、

「ありがとうございますっ」

勢いよく言って踵を返した。

羽狩りから、どこまで逃げられるだろうか。

.....恐らく、長くはないだろう。

「うあっ!？」

脇の路地に走り込もうとした少年が、壁にぶつかったかのように転倒した。



Man: 「ここは行き止まりだ、羽つき」

This is the end of the line, Winged.

A man with dark, dark eyes steps out of the alley.

横道から出てきたのは、底暗い目をした男。

More follow him, until five men are visible.

続いて、さらに男が5人、姿を現した。

From the looks of their uniforms, they're a squad of Wing Hunters.

服装から見るに、羽狩りの一隊だ。

Man: 「羽を確認しろ」

Confirm the wings.

The man's clearly in charge; the others follow his orders, bearing the boy to the ground.

指揮者らしき男の号令で、羽狩りたちが少年を取り押さえる。

I don't feel like getting to know these guys any better.

こいつらと仲良くなる気はない。

It's time to leave, before I get involved too.

面倒に巻きこまれる前にこの場を離れよう。

Wing Hunter Commander: 「そこの君」

You over there.

A voice calls out to me from behind.

背後から声がかかる。

Kaim:

「.....なんだ？」

...what?

Wing Hunter Commander:

「少し話を聞かせてくれないか」

I don't suppose you could answer a few questions?

Kaim:

「.....」

...

If I refuse too rudely, they could accuse me of harboring the Winged.

無闇に反抗すると、羽つきを匿っていると疑われる可能性もある。

And if that happens, they could easily put me under constant surveillance.

そうなれば、四六時中監視がつき厄介なことこの上ない。

Best to keep my head down here.

ここは大人しくしておこう。

Kaim:

「ああ、構わない」

Yeah, sure.

Wing Hunter Commander:

「協力感謝する」

Thank you for your cooperation.

Quite the polite commander, this one.

慇懃に礼を言う指揮者。

Before our eyes, the boy's clothes are ripped from him by the underlings.

その目の前で、部下たちにより、少年の服が破られていく。

Sure enough, pure white wings sprout from the kid's back.

果たして、骨の浮いた背中には白い羽が生えていた。

Red-Haired Wing Hunter:

「副隊長、羽を確認しました」

Vice-Captain, we have wing confirmation.

Wing Hunter Vice-Captain:

「保護しろ」

Take him in.

Winged Boy:

「やめて.....許して、下さい.....」

Stop... please, forgive me...

Wing Hunter Vice-Captain:

You will receive treatment for the Feathering Sickness at the quarantine facility. There's nothing to be afraid of.

「君は治癒院で羽化病の治療を受けるんだ。怖がることはない」

Winged Boy:

But... but...!

「でも、でも」

Wing Hunter Vice-Captain:

It's alright.

「大丈夫だ」

Winged Boy:

H-hey, mister...

「.....お、お兄さん」

Annoyingly, the boy turns to me, calling out in a weak voice.

迷惑なことに、少年は力ない声を俺に向けた。

Wing Hunter Vice-Captain:

Are you a relative of this Winged?

「君は羽つきの身内なのか？」

Kaim:

Never seen him before in my life.

「赤の他人だ」

Kaim:

And just so we're clear, I don't have any intention of getting in your way, either.

「ちなみに、あんたらの邪魔をするつもりもない」

Wing Hunter Vice-Captain:

Just the other day, I met a man who said the same thing. The instant I turned my back, he attacked.

「先日、君と同じことを言って、俺達が背を向けた瞬間に襲ってきた奴がいたよ」

Wing Hunter Vice-Captain:

One of my subordinates lost his arm. A clean cut just below the elbow.

「部下が腕をなくした。肘の下からすっぱりだ」

Kaim:

Sorry to hear that.

「同情する」

I spread my hands, doing my damndest not to look like an enemy.

両手を広げ、敵意がないことを示す。

Kaim:

I'm just gonna leave. That sound good to everyone?

Wing Hunter Vice-Captain:

Well, no need to be in such a hurry.

The Vice-Captain looks at the Winged boy.

Wing Hunter Vice-Captain:

What is your relationship with this man? He hit you, didn't he?

Winged Boy:

N-no...

Wing Hunter Vice-Captain:

If you cooperate with us, we can arrange for preferential treatment for you at the quarantine facility.

Winged Boy:

...

The boy takes one look at me, then screws up his face like a baby.

Winged Boy:

That man, he's a member of the group called the Untarnished Golden Chain...

Winged Boy:

He suddenly came up to me and demanded money, and when I refused... he hit me!

Uncertainly confident that he's gained the Wing Hunters' good graces, the boy begins spinning his version of the truth.

He manages to summon up quite the impressive vocabulary describing how tough he's had it, and how unreasonable and cruel I am.

「俺は今すぐ消える。それでいいだろう？」

「ま、慌てるなよ」

副隊長が、羽つきの少年を見る。

「こっちの人とはどういう関係だ？殴られたんじゃないのか？」

「い、いえ」

「我々に協力してくれば、治癒院でも優先的に治療が受けられるぞ」

「.....」

少年は俺の顔を一瞥してから、急に幼い顔を作った。

「あの人、《不蝕金鎖》って組織の人で.....」

「突然お金を出せって言ってきたんですが、断ったら殴られたんです」

羽狩りのご機嫌を取るのが得と判断したのか、少年は虚実織り交ぜて事情を喋り始める。

自分がいかに哀れで、俺がどれだけ理不尽な存在であるか、少ない語彙を搾り出す。

And of course, he doesn't forget to draw attention to his nose every now and again.

Crafty little shit.

Wing Hunter Vice-Captain:

I see...

Wing Hunter Vice-Captain:

This boy claims that you are a member of the Untarnished Golden Chain. Well?

Kaim:

He's wrong.

Kaim:

Sure, I take jobs from them from time to time, but I'm not a full member.

Wing Hunter Vice-Captain:

Then you say the boy is lying?

Kaim:

Yup.

Kaim:

If you've got any pull over at their headquarters, ask if I'm a full member or not. Will that convince you?

Wing Hunter Vice-Captain:

Even if we did ask, I doubt they would tell us the truth.

Wing Hunter Vice-Captain:

The members of the Untarnished Golden Chain have been very uncooperative. It's quite a problem.

Kaim:

The struggle is real, huh.

時折、鼻声になるのも忘れない。

したたかなものだ。

「なるほど……」

「少年は、君が《不蝕金鎖》の一員だと言っているが、どうだ？」

「違うな」

「仕事を受けることはあるが、構成員じゃない」

「では、少年が嘘をついていると」

「ああ」

「もし組織にツテがあるなら、俺が構成員かどうか聞いてみてくれ。事実がわかるだろう」

「聞いたところで、本当のことは教えてくれないだろう」

「《不蝕金鎖》の方々は、我々に非協力的で困っている」

「苦勞が絶えないな」

Wing Hunter Vice-Captain:

「まったくだ」

Truly.

Wing Hunter Vice-Captain:

「実は、部下の腕を切り落としたのも組織の人間らしくてね」

The truth is, the man who cut off my subordinate's arm seemed rather like an organization type himself.

The Vice-Captain taps my arm with the flat of his naked sword.

副隊長が、抜き身で俺の腕をピタピタと叩く。

What, is he considering taking a little revenge?

俺に部下の報復でもするつもりだろうか。

Wing Hunter Vice-Captain:

「そう警戒しなくてもいい。詰め所で少し話を聞かせてもらうだけだ」

There's no need to be so tense. I just want to have a few words with you back at the station.

Wing Hunter Vice-Captain:

「牢獄や組織の情勢を知ること、で、一人でも多く羽つきを保護したいのだ」

Learning about the current state of affairs within the Prison and your organization will allow me to take more Winged into our care, after all.

Wing Hunter Vice-Captain:

「それが、街全体の平和にも繋がるだろう？」

And that is a goal directly linked to keeping the peace for everyone in this city, wouldn't you say?

Something about the Vice-Captain's smile feels off.

副隊長の笑顔には、どこか濁った雰囲気があった。

Going along with them might not be the best idea after all.

着いていくと面倒なことになりそうだ。

At worst, I might never see the light of day again.

最悪、二度と戻れないかもしれない。

Kaim:

「あんたらに、狩りを邪魔する人間をしょっぴく権限があるのは知っている」

I know you people have the power to detain anyone who gets in the way of your hunting.

Kaim:

But I'm not giving you any trouble at all. I don't get why you're so set on keeping me around.

Wing Hunter Vice-Captain:

That, I will explain at the station.

Kaim:

...

I could cut them down here, but I'd make an enemy of the Wing Hunters for life.

I could get away from this group, but you can't escape from wanted posters plastered on every streetcorner.

(Folded into text above)

I just want to wash my hands of this, but it doesn't seem likely with this fellow.

What should I do...?

???:

I believe this man is telling the truth.

A clear voice sweeps through the alley.

The Wing Hunters turn as one.

The person their gazes fall on is

「だが、俺は何の邪魔もしていない。どうしてここまで絡まれるのかがわからないんだが」

「それは、詰め所で説明する」

「.....」

争いになれば、羽狩りに被害を与えてしまう。

この場は切り抜けたとしても、今後、目の仇にされることは明らかだ。

逃げれば逃げたで、似顔絵をバラ撒かれかねない。

何とか丸く収めたいが、先方にその気は薄い。

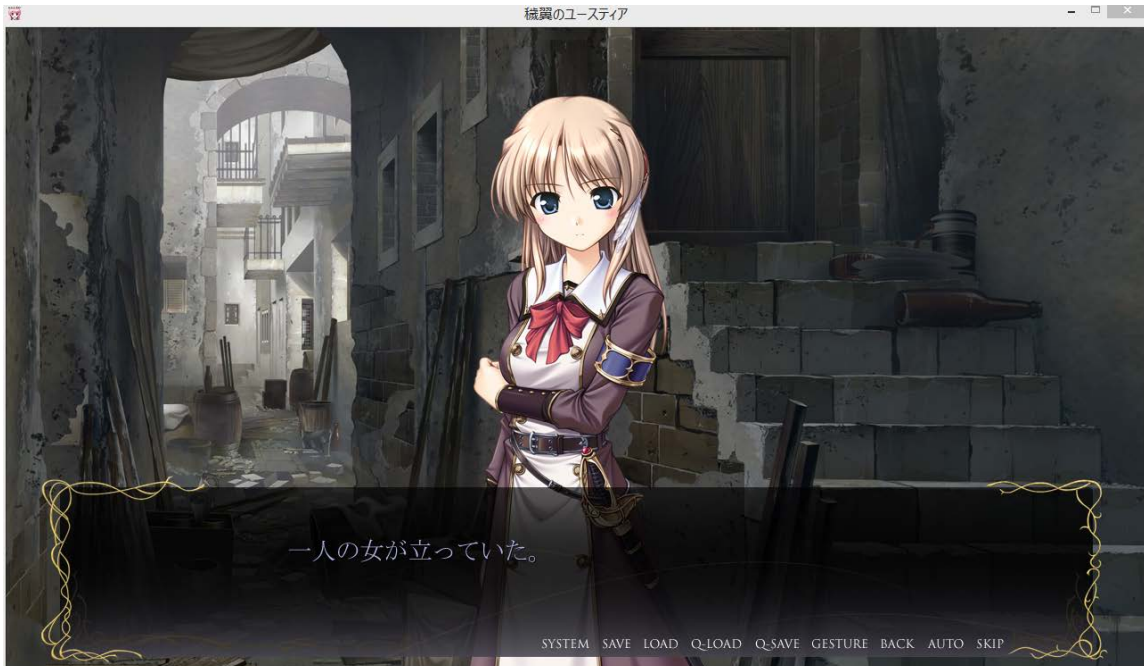
どうする.....

「私は、そちらの方が正しいと思う」

裏路地の淀みを吹き払うような、澄んだ声が聞こえた。

羽狩りが一斉に振り返る。

彼らの視線の先には、



A woman.

Her features are delicate, and her expression suggests a powerful will.

The sharp, fitted lines of the Wing Hunter uniform contrast with the soft-looking curves of her body.

This is the first time I've ever seen a female Hunter.

Wing Hunter Vice-Captain:

Captain, this is an opportunity to acquire information about the Untarnished Golden Chain-

And she's the Captain, no less.

I've heard that the Wing Hunters, who specialize in combat, get a lot of the recruits who wash out of the palace guard for being too dangerous or reckless.

If they made her a Captain despite her sex, this respectable-looking woman might well be the most twisted of the entire bunch.

一人の女が立っていた。

顔は端整な作りで、意志が強そうな眉をしている。

隙無く着込んだ羽狩りの制服と、身体が醸し出す柔らかな雰囲気の不釣り合いだ。

女の羽狩りを見るのはこれが初めてだった。

「隊長、ここは《不蝕金鎖》の情報を得る機会なのでは」

しかも隊長か。

荒事が多い羽狩りは、衛兵の中から命知らずを選抜して編制されたと聞いたことがある。

女だてらにその隊長を務めているとなれば、実はあの女、真っ当な

Wing Hunter Captain:

Vice-Captain Lang. Collecting information or no, I can't turn a blind eye to your intimidation tactics.

Vice-Captain Lang:

Intimidation was not my intention...

Wing Hunter Captain:

Would you be so kind as to tell me the name of our soldier who lost his arm?

Wing Hunter Captain:

I'll have to pay him a visit in the hospital.

Vice-Captain Lang:

That's...

The Vice-Captain bites his lip.

Ah, I see.

Seems like spending all that time around liars and criminals has gotten to the good Vice-Captain.

Wing Hunter Captain:

I understand that you were eager to get results.

Wing Hunter Captain:

However, our job relies on the cooperation of the people.

Wing Hunter Captain:

We must not betray the people's faith in us.

Vice-Captain Lang:

As you say, Captain.

顔をして結構な人格破綻者なのかもしれない。

「ラング副隊長。情報を得るためとはいえ、恫喝まがいの発言は看過できないな」

「恫喝というわけでは.....」

「腕を切り落とされたという隊員の名前を教えてくれ」

「私から見舞いを出しておく」

「それは.....」

副隊長が唇を噛んだ。

なるほど。

嘘の嫌疑で人をしょっぴこうとは、羽狩りもなかなか世慣れてるじゃないか。

「君が少しでも成果を上げようと努力していることは、わかっているつもりだ」

「とはいえ、私たちの仕事は民衆の協力があつてこそ」

「人々の信頼を損なうことがあつてはならない」

「肝に銘じます」

The Vice-Captain tosses me a deadly look, sheathing his sword.

Wing Hunter Captain:

I apologize for my subordinate's actions.

Kaim:

Spare me the second round, okay?

Giving her a loose wave, I turn to leave.

Wing Hunter Captain:

Please, wait a moment.

Kaim:

What?

Wing Hunter Captain:

There is one thing I want to confirm.

Wing Hunter Captain:

Is it true that you're not a member of the Untarnished Golden Chain?

Kaim:

It's true.

Kaim:

Out of curiosity, if I was, what would you do?

Wing Hunter Captain:

I would ask how it felt to live off of money stolen from the hands of the weak.

Kaim:

...Oh?

Kaim:

Well, I hope you get your answer someday.

副隊長は、俺に鋭い眼光を投げつけてから、剣を鞘に収めた。

「そこの方、部下が失礼した」

「二度目は勘弁して欲しいな」

軽く手を上げ、その場を立ち去ろうとする。

「待ってくれ」

「なんだ？」

「一つ確認したい」

「あなたが《不蝕金鎖》の構成員でないのは本当か？」

「本当だ」

「もし俺が構成員だったら、どうするつもりだ？」

「暴力により得た金で生活する気分を聞いてみたかった」

「.....へえ」

「答えをもらえるといいな」

I raise my hand one more time, showing the Wing Hunters my back.

If she asked one of the Golden Chain that question, the best answer she'd get would be 'well, you would know'.

What a strange Captain she is.

もう一度手を上げ、羽狩りたちに背を向ける。

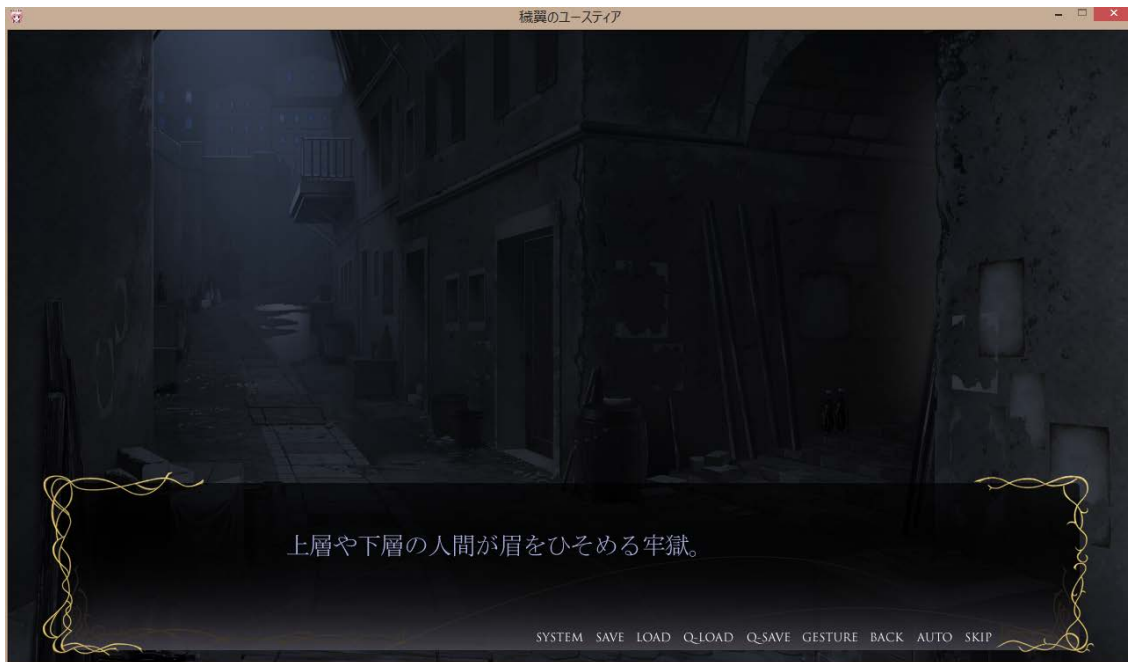
組織の奴らにそんなことを尋ねても、羽狩りも似たようなものだと返されるのが関の山だろう。

変な女隊長だ。

APPENDIX 3

KAIM FINDS EUSTIA (Act 1, p. 68-76)

Later the same night, Kaim accepts an urgent job from Sieg, the head of the Golden Chain, to go investigate what has happened to a cartload of girls from the upper parts of the city that were intended to enter the Chain's brothels. Upon reaching the area where they disappeared, he realizes that something is very wrong.



The Upper and Lower Cities are united in their distaste for the Prison.

上層や下層の人間が眉をひそめる牢獄。

And this area here is the center of the rat's nest.

ここから先は牢獄の最奥。

It's not unthinkable that the whole cartload of girls could have been murdered in here.

殺しはもちろん何が起こっても不思議ではない。

Kaim:

「……」

...

I try not to breathe too deeply of the stagnant and stinking air, following the alleyway Sieg had indicated.

空気の淀みと悪臭に閉口しつつ、ジークに教えられた経路を辿っていく。

There's not a soul in sight.

However, I can feel eyes on me, watching me like hawks from cracks and crevasses in the dark.

Someone who wasn't used to this kind of work might not even realize they were being watched.

My skin prickles in a way I haven't felt for a long time; the sensation brings back memories.

Back when I worked as an assassin, I walked this kind of alleyway daily.

I've crouched in a sewer for two days and nights to catch a target before.

For those two days and nights, it felt like invisible, nameless insects were swarming all over my body.

I'm not an assassin anymore, but my body remembers those days.

It's not like I chose to become a killer in the first place.

It's just that, if I hadn't, I'd either have started selling my body or ended up lying dead in a ditch somewhere.

I didn't have a choice.

For the first time in a long time, memories of back then filter back into my mind.

Called back by thoughts of my old way of life, probably.

How stupid.

Kaim:

通行人はいない。

だが、路地の暗がりや窓の隙間からは、猛禽類のような視線が投げかけられている。

荒い仕事に慣れていない人間なら、見られていることにすら気づかないかもしれない。

久しぶりに味わう肌がピリピリするような感覚に、ふと昔を思い出す。

暗殺を生業にしていた頃は、毎日のようにこんな路地を歩いた。

目標の隙を見つけるため、ドブの中に二昼夜ほどいたこともある。

あの時は、体じゅうを得体の知れない虫が這い回って気が狂いそうになった。

殺しをやめた今でも、あの頃の事は身体が覚えている。

そもそも、望んで始めた仕事ではなかった。

だが、暗殺者を選んでいなければ、今頃は男娼になっていたか野垂れ死んでいたかだ。

選択の余地はなかった。

久しぶりに、あの時の情景が脳裏をよぎった。

俺の生き方に説教を垂れたかったのだろうか。

馬鹿らしい。

「……」

...

Enough reminiscing.

And then, just as my attention returns to the present—

It's faint, but I hear an ugly, wet sound up ahead.

The sound of something striking human flesh—

To be more precise, it sounds like someone being run over by a horsecart.

Kaim:

...

I turn corner after corner, the way getting progressively narrower and the air getting thicker and thicker.

The buildings on both sides soar overhead, blocking out the light of the moon.

From within the stifling, murky darkness comes the overpowering stench of blood.

In all likelihood, someone's been murdered here.

The important questions now are who's holding the knife, and who's being killed.

Could it be the girls Sieg bought?

Underneath another splattering sound, I can hear rough breathing.

It sounds like the breath of some kind of animal.

感傷的な時間の使い方はやめよう。

と、意識を周囲に戻した時——

僅かにだが、湿り気を帯びた打撃音がした。

人間が殴打される音——

というよりは、馬車に踏み潰された時の音に近い。

「……」

一回、二回と角を曲がるほどに、道は細くなり、空気の淀みが増していく。

両脇の建物は高くそびえ、月の光はほとんど届かない。

すべてが不鮮明な暗闇の中、鮮烈な血の匂いが流れてきた。

十中八九、人が死んでいると見ていい。

誰が殺しているのか。

ジークが仕入れた女達が被害者なのか。

重く湿った音に混じり、荒い息づかいが聞こえる。

獣じみた息づかいだ。

Like whoever it is is getting off on the act of murder.

That's the sense I get from it.

Kaim:

Ugh...

I start to prepare for the coming fight, conserving my energy.

Mentally, I start to work myself up, telling myself that I can win.

This is a ritual I have, to prepare my mind and body for battle.

There's nothing really special about it.

I do it every time I go to work, to get into the mindset.

Just a little trick I learned from the last head of the Golden Chain.

I draw my knife.

The custom-made matte blade almost vanishes in the darkness.

Kaim:

Here we go.

殺すことに興奮を覚える奴だ。

そんな想像が頭をよぎる。

「.....」

来るべき戦闘に備え、身体のカミを抜く。

頭の中で、自分が成功する心象を反復する。

この儀式を経ることで、精神と肉体が暗殺者のそれへと最適化される。

何も特別な技術じゃない。

仕事の前に必ず同じ行動を経ることで、回路の切り替えを心身に促す。

《不蝕金鎖》先代から教えられた、ちょっとした作法だ。

ナイフを抜く。

無反射加工の刀身が、ぬらりと闇に溶ける。

「（行くぞ）」



The instant I start to move, leaping out onto the slaughter floor,

A brilliant light illuminates the entire area.

The light quickly fades.

Like nothing had happened at all, the alleyway is once again enveloped in darkness.

Kaim:

No... it can't be...

The color of that light...

惨劇の舞台へ飛び込もうとした刹那、

強烈な光が周囲を照らし出した。

光はすぐに収束する。

何事もなかったように、路地はまた闇に包まれた。

「そんな、馬鹿な……」

この光の色……



I could never forget it.

That day...

The light that filled the dome of Heaven just before the Gran Forte.

The color of the Tragedia, what people called the Sunset of the End Days.

Kaim:

Don't tell me...

Another Gran Forte—

Before the thought is even finished, profound fear grips my chest.

My breath goes ragged.

I can't focus my vision.

This insane, insensate dread shakes me to my very core.

Calm down.

忘れることなどできない。

あの日——

《大崩落》の直前、天蓋を覆った光。

《終わりの夕焼け》と同じ色だ。

「まさか……」

再び《大崩落》が——

考えるより早く、恐怖が頭を埋め尽くした。

自然と息が荒くなる。

視界の焦点が定まらない。

存在の芯を揺るがすような、傍若無人なまでの恐怖。

冷静になれ。

Panicking in a situation like this is a great way to reduce your life expectancy.

Steady yourself and regulate your breathing.

Just then—

Kaim:

Ghh!

I throw my head back reflexively as something flashes at the tip of my nose.

Whether it's a fist or a blade, I can't tell.

Whatever it was, that was a strike made with killing intent.

If I had reacted a split second later, I would probably have lost my head.

I settle into a fighting stance and prepare myself for the next attack.

Kaim:

...!

I can't see my opponent at all.

Looking around in a rush, I catch a fleeting glimpse of a black shadow vanishing into a distant side street.

What the hell was that...?

It was horrifyingly fast.

The one impression I got of it was that it was black all over.

Belatedly, I realize that there's liquid dripping down my right cheek.

この状況での混乱は、確実に命を縮める。

腹に力を入れ、呼吸を整える。

その時、

「くっっ！」

反射的に仰け反った俺の鼻先を、何かが一閃した。

拳か鈍器かはわからない。

だが、確実な殺意を持った攻撃だった。

一瞬でも反応が遅れば、俺の頭は消えていただろう。

体勢を立て直し、次の攻撃に備える。

「.....」

しかし、相手の姿が見当たらない。

慌てて見回すと、遠くの横路地に吸いこまれていく黒い影が一瞬だけ見えた。

一体、何者だったのか。

恐ろしく俊敏だった。

かろうじてわかったのは、黒っぽい姿をしていた、ということだけだ。

ふと、左頬を濡らす液体に気づいた。

The flesh has been laid open.

I'm lucky to still be alive.

I taste the saltiness of the blood on my fingertip and brace myself again.

Kaim:

Alright.

I can't go home without an answer.

I need to know what the shadowy black figure was doing in that alley.

Time to get to the bottom of this tragedy. I proceed into the alleyway.

Scene Change: The Bloody Alleyway

Kaim:

Gh...!

I desperately hold back the urge to vomit.

I'd thought I was used to the sight of corpses, but I was wrong.

I've never seen anything like this massacre.

I bite my lip and try to focus my vision, made blurry by shock.

何かで切り裂かれたようだ。

命があっただけでも幸運だった。

指先で血液の塩気を味わい、気を引き締める。

「よし」

確かめなくてはならない。

黒い人影が、路地の奥で何をしていたのか。

これから直面するであろう惨状を想像しつつ、路地の奥へと進む。

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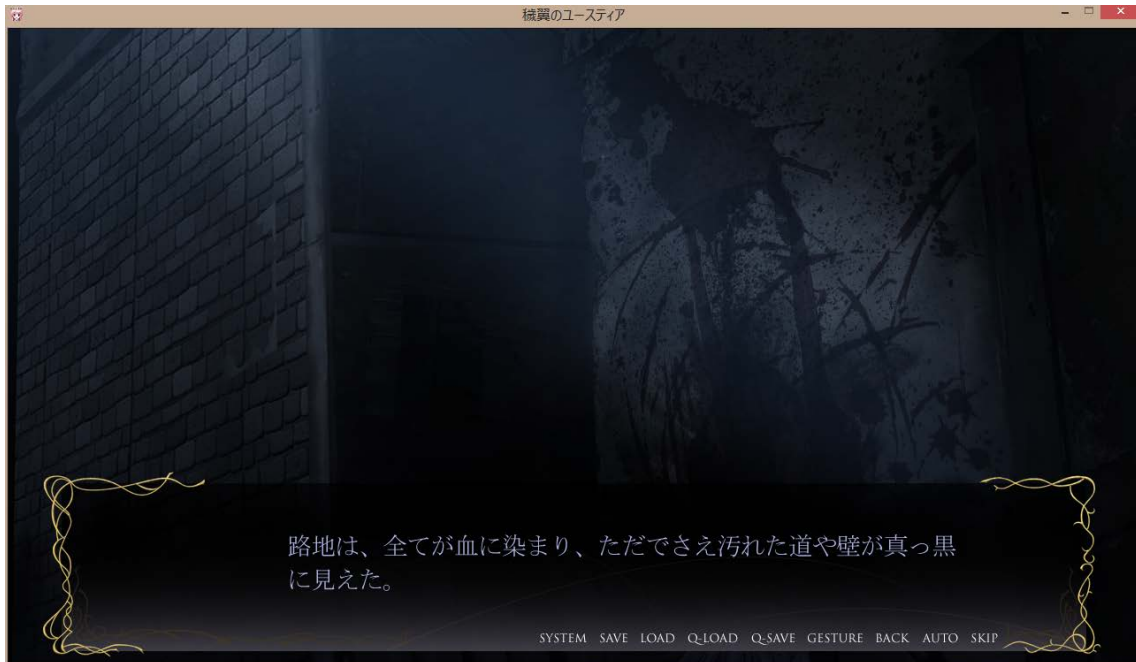
「うっ……」

こみ上げる嘔吐感を何とかやり過ごす。

死体には慣れていると思っていたが、甘かったようだ。

これほどの惨状は見たことがない。

唇を噛み、衝撃で朦朧とした頭に活を入れた。



The entire alleyway is dyed with blood. Everything, from the ground to the walls themselves, is stained pitch-black.

The walls on both sides are splattered with offal, limbs and hair, like some sick reproduction of an anatomy textbook.

To my right, light glints off puddles of blood so deep it looks like a storm had just passed.

Chunks of meat soak in them, like twisted stewpots.

There have to be at least five or six corpses... I can't clearly tell.

Keeping alert to my surroundings, I inspect the corpses.

To start with, the upper half of a man, still clinging to the wreckage of the cart.

路地は、全てが血に染まり、ただでさえ汚れた道や壁が真っ黒に見えた。

両側の壁には、腸やら指やら毛髪やらがこびりつき、さながら人体部品の展示会だ。

石畳には、一雨あったかのように、なまめかしく光る水溜りができている。

そこに、いくつもの肉塊が浸っている様は、具の多い豪華な煮込み料理にも見えた。

死体はざっと5、6人分だろうか.....はっきりとしない。

周囲を警戒しながら、死体を検分していく。

手始めに、馬車の残骸にしがみついている男の上半身を転がした。

Kaim:

This guy must be Sieg's man...

That confirms it – the other corpses must be the girls Sieg bought.

While I can't imagine they held any illusions about what life in the brothels would be like, I don't think any of them envisioned dying like this.

Or perhaps some of them would have preferred this.

While confirming the number of dead, that thought suddenly hits me.

Clatter, clatter-

There's a sound.

In the shadow of a piece of lumber that had fallen against the wall.

Kaim:

Is somebody there?!

Seconds pass.

Seconds more.

There's no answer.

I hold my knife at the ready and move to check the source of the sound.

「こいつは.....ジークの部下だったな」

とすると、他の死体はジークが仕入れた女達か。

娼婦生活に明るい希望を持っていたとも思えないが、よもやこんな死に方をするとは想像もしてなかっただろう。

苦しまずに死ねたのなら、娼婦になるよりはよかったのかもしれない。

肉塊となった女たちの数を確認しながら、ふとそんなことを思う。

カタッ

物音がした。

壁に立てかけられた材木の陰だ。

「誰かいるのか」

.....。

.....。

返事はない。

ナイフを構え物音の正体確かめる。



Lying there is a single girl.

As though praying for someone to save her,
she had extended one hand in front of her.

But this is strange...

Her clothes are torn to shreds, but there don't
seem to be many injuries on her skin.

She can't possibly have been shown mercy by
that maniac of a killer, right?

Kaim:

...

First of all, I need to see if she's alive.

I stretch a hand out toward the back of her
neck.

そこに転がっていたのは、一人の
少女だった。

誰かに助けを求めたのか、前方へ
と手を伸ばしている。

しかし不思議だ。

服はボロボロだが、肌はほとんど
傷ついていない。

いかれた殺人者のお気に召さなか
ったのだろうか。

「.....」

まずは生死を確認しよう。

少女の首筋に手を伸ばす。



Kaim:

「!？」

?!

Her body starts to glow.

身体が光を帯びた。

Kaim:

「こ、この色は……まさか……」

Th-that color... it can't be...

The gleam of the Tragedia.

《終わりの夕焼け》の輝き。

What the hell is this?

ということだ？

Why is she giving off that color of light?

なぜこんな光を放っている。

No, wait, more importantly, why is a human being glowing in the first place?

いや待て、そもそも人が光るなんて有り得ない。

It has to be an optical illusion.

目の錯覚だ。

Then, before my bewildered eyes,

困惑する俺の眼前、

The light that had been enveloping the girl moves like a living thing, collecting at her back.

少女を包んでいた光が、生き物のように背中に集まっていく。

And then—

そして—



It forms into tiny wings.

Kaim:

Is she... a Winged...?

However, I've never heard of anything like wings made out of light.

What the hell is going on?

As I watch, confused, the girl's light slowly fades.

Kaim:

Hey, are you alive? Hey!

Girl:

...

Her back is rising and falling almost imperceptibly.

I don't know what the deal was with that shadowy bastard, but right now this girl is the only survivor.

小さな羽となった。

「羽つき.....なのか」

だが、光が集まってできた羽なんて聞いたこともない。

一体、何なんだ。

混乱する俺の前で少女の光が弱くなっていく。

「おい、生きてるか！おい！」

「.....」

胸が僅かに上下している。

逃げられた奴がいるかもしれないが、今のところ確実な生存者はこの少女だけだ。

I'll bring her to Eris or something to be cared for, and then we'll hear what happened here.

Or so I'd like, but I don't want to carry around a Winged when there's a chance the Wing Hunters might find us.

What should I do?

If I just leave her here, the street thugs or wild dogs will get to her in no time.

Kaim:

...

Shit.

エリスにでも介抱させ、事件の情報を知りたいところだ。

とはいえ羽つきを連れ回せば、羽狩りに目をつけられる可能性がある。

どうする？

ここに放置しておけば、チンピラか野良犬がいろいろに処分してくれるだろう。

「.....」

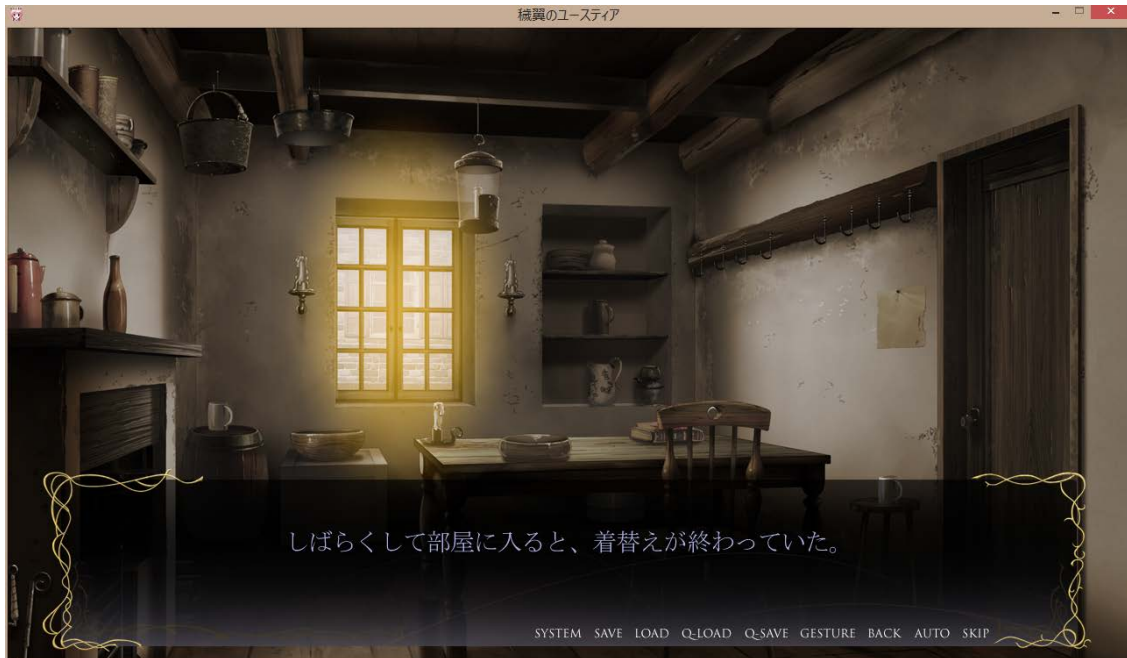
くそっ。

APPENDIX 4

TIA REMEMBERS (Act 1, p. 135-152)

The day after Kaim rescues the glowing girl from the alleyway, he attempts to question her about the murders and finds that she has amnesia regarding the incident. He asks his friend Eris, the only doctor in the brothel district, to look her over and see if the cause of her memory loss is physical or psychological. Checking in with Sieg, he is told to learn whatever he can, then dispose of her when she is of no further use.

Melt, who appears later in the excerpt, is a former sex worker for the Chain who now runs a pub called Violeeta in the brothel district. She is close friends with Kaim, Sieg and Eris, and often hosts them for dinner and for discussing Chain business.



I come back inside when she's finished changing.

The girl is sitting on the bed, hugging her knees.

Kaim:

Huh, you actually clean up pretty well.

しばらくして部屋に入ると、着替えが終わっていた。

少女はベッドで膝を抱えている。

「まともな服着りゃ、多少は見られるじゃないか」



Eris:

「こういう子が好み？」

Oh, so she's your type, then?

Kaim:

More than a pushy doctor who snarks at every little thing.

「いちいち、つまらないことを言う医者よりはな」



I blow Eris off and face the girl.

Kaim:

Hey, you. Hungry?

Girl:

Ah... um...

The girl, who had been bracing herself, looks at me.

There's still some innocence left there, and she has a well-arranged face.

However,

Her expression hovers somewhere between anxiety and fear.

A thin, weak smile automatically crosses her face.

The smile of someone whose life has left them with no path but that of a servant, or a slave.

Kaim:

I'm asking if you're hungry or not.

Girl:

Y...yes.

I nod slightly as she finally answers.

Eris, taking the cue, brings some food to the bed on a wooden tray.

The girl's eyes follow the tray like a hawk's.

I can hear her stomach growling.

Kaim:

Before you eat, there's something I want to ask you.

エリスを受け流し、少女に向かう。

「お前、腹は減っているか」

「あ.....え.....」

身を固くした少女が、俺に顔を向ける。

あどけなさが残っているが、なかなか整った顔をしている。

だが、

恐怖と不安に媚びをまぶした目色。

自動的に浮かぶ薄っぺらな微笑。

他人に隷属することを余儀なくされてきた人間の顔だ。

「腹が減っているかと聞いている」

「は.....はい」

ようやくのことで頷く。

気を利かせたエリスが、木の皿に食事を盛ってベッドへ置いた。

少女の目が皿に釘付けになる。

唾液を呑み込む音が聞こえた。

「食う前に聞きたいことがある」

Kaim:	「お前が襲われた時、何か光を見なかったか？」
When you were attacked, did you see a light of some kind?	
Girl:	「光……」
Light...	
A faint look of trepidation settles onto the girl's face.	少女の顔に、かすかな怯えが浮かぶ。
Kaim:	「心当たりがあるか？」
Remembered something?	
Girl:	「何か、見たような気もするんですが……」
I do... feel like I saw something, but...	
Girl:	「思い出そうとすると……気持ちが悪くなって……」
When I try to remember... I start feeling sick...	
Kaim:	「少し頑張ってくれ」
Try to push through it, please.	
Kaim:	「思い出せば、飯が食えるぞ」
As soon as you remember, you can eat.	
Girl:	「う……はい」
Uh... alright.	
The girl's eyebrows knot.	少女の眉が歪む。
A faint sheen of sweat begins to shine on her pale forehead.	血の気がない額に、うっすら汗が浮かぶ。
Kaim:	「どうだ？」
Well?	
Girl:	「ん……え、ええと……」
Mmn... um...	
Kaim:	「……」
...	

I observe the girl.

少女を観察する。

Just like last time, something about what she's saying doesn't quite add up.

前回同じ質問をした時、こいつの言葉にどこか腑に落ちないところがあった。

Time to put a little more pressure on her.

今回は強めに緊張を与えてみよう。

Kaim:

「思い出してくれ」

Try to remember.

Girl:

「す、すみません.....わ、わたし.....」

I-I'm sorry... I...

Kaim:

「思い出せ」

Remember.

Kaim:

「あまり手こずらせると、後悔するぞ」

If you force my hand, you're going to regret it.

Girl:

「ん.....うっ.....く.....」

Nn...

Girl:

「うっ、くっ.....」

Ugh...

The girl puts her hand to her mouth.

少女が口に手をあてた。

Kaim:

「別に吐いてもいいぞ」

Go ahead and puke.



Eris:

「もういい」

Enough of this.

Eris:

「今日は休ませてあげたら？」

Let her rest, won't you?

Kaim:

「いつからそんなに優しくなったんだ？」

And when did you get so soft, huh?

Eris:

「無理させると思い出せるものも思い出せなくなるわよ、ってだけ」

If you push her too hard, she's going to lose everything she can't remember. That's all I'm saying.

Well, Eris is the doctor.

医者のエリスが言うことだ。

For the time being, I'll guess I'll follow her recommendations.

ひとまず従っておこう。

Kaim:

「.....わかった」

...fine.

Kaim:

「ま、おいおい思い出してくれ」

Just take it slow, then.

Girl:

...I'm sorry.

She looks disheartened.

However, her focus has already turned to the bread on Eris's tray.

Kaim:

...

She may honestly not have been able to get anything, but something still stinks here.

Assuming for a moment she was pretending to have forgotten, what's her reasoning?

I'll think it over a little.

Girl:

...

She looks at me with feverish eyes.

For someone who was just about to vomit, she knows to look after herself.

Kaim:

Go ahead.

Girl:

...!

She immediately tears into the food.

Kaim:

Don't get crumbs in my bed.

Girl:

Mhm!

Eris:

You're spilling when you nod, you know.

「.....すみません」

しょげた顔を見せる少女。

だが、関心は早くもパンに向かっていた。

「.....」

確証は得られなかったが、やはりどこか嘘くさい。

仮にこいつが忘れたふりをしているとしたら、理由は何だ？

少し考えてみよう。

「.....」

熱っぽい視線を向けられる。

さっきまで吐きそうだったくせに現金な奴だ。

「食っていい」

「.....っ！」

即攻でかぶりついた。

「ベッドを汚すな」

「んっ、んっ」

「頷きながらこぼしてるんだけど」

Kaim:

Oh, come on.

Hunger has a way of stripping away the humanity in people.

For just a little bit of food, the ones with power will abuse it, and the ones without will sell their souls.

That's daily life in the Prison.

Especially lately, the number of people starving has grown.

Prices keep going up, and somehow, the population does too.

From what Sieg says, it's not just the Prison's problem.

I guess you could say that the whole city is starving, really.

You have to wonder if something's happening.

Scene Change: Later That Night

After inhaling her food, the girl drops like a tree someone's taken an axe to.

Tomorrow, I'll see if I can't get her to remember the main points, at least.

There's a knock at the door.

Just Sieg:

Tee hee, it's me. Let me in?

Well, that's unfortunate.

Let's ignore him.

Just Sieg:

「ったく」

飢えは、人間らしさをいとも簡単に奪い去ってしまう。

わずかな食料のため、力ある者は暴力を振るい、力のないものは人格を売り渡す。

牢獄では日常的な風景だ。

特に最近は餓える人間が増えている。

物の値段は年々上がっているし、どうやら人の数も増えているようだ。

ジークの話では、これは牢獄だけの問題ではないらしい。

都市全体が餓えていると言っているのだろう。

何が起きているのだろうか。

--

飯を腹に収めた少女は、ゼンマイが切れたかのように眠りに落ちた。

明日には肝心なところを思い出して欲しいもんだ。

扉が鳴った。

「うふふ、私よ。開けて」

残念な奴が現れた。

無視。

「こーら、イジワルしないで」

Come on, don't be so mean.

He's beyond annoying.

Eris:

I'll see what he wants.

Kaim:

Ignore him and maybe he'll go away.

Eris gets up anyway.

Eris:

What's the password?

うざったい。

「見てくる」

「放っておけ」

勝手に動くエリス。

「合い言葉は？」



Just Sieg:

Kaim loves Eris – I repeat, Kaim loves Eris.

Eris:

Wonderful.

And she lets the bastard in.

Just Sieg:

Sorry – for – the – wait ♪

「カイムはエリスにメロメロ、カ
イムはエリスにメロメロ」

「素晴らしい」

開けやがった。

「お・ま・た・せ♪」

Kaim:

「死ね」

Die.



Melt:

「あら、ひどいこと言うわね？」

Oh, how cruel, Kaim.

Melt peeks in around the shoulder of the dumbass.

馬鹿の後ろからメルトが顔を出した。

Kaim:

「いたのか」

Oh, I didn't know you were with him.

Melt:

「いたわ」

I was.

Eris:

「何の用？ここは合い言葉が必要よ」

What's going on here? You'll need to give the password too.

Melt:

「エリスはメルトにメロメロ」

Eris loves Melt.

Eris:

「お客様お帰ります」

Go home, you two.

Melt:

Oh, don't be so chilly.

Sieg and Melt step into my house.

Eris stands next to me, fidgeting while she gives Melt a dirty look.

Sieg:

I came to check on things, and brought her with me.

Melt:

Are we in the way?

Kaim:

Not particularly.

Kaim:

But the girl's asleep already.

Melt:

That's fine. I just wanted to see her, that's all.

Melt takes a look at the girl in the bed.

Melt:

Oh my, she's a little beauty, isn't she?

Melt:

It's a pity she can't enter the trade.

Sieg:

It certainly is.

Sieg:

And we can't return her now that she's grown wings, either.

「そうツンツンしないでよ」

ジークとメルトが部屋に入ってきた。

エリスは、メルトを威嚇しながらいそいそと俺の隣に立つ。

「様子を見に行くって言ったら、こいつもついてきた」

「お邪魔だった？」

「別に」

「だが、女は寝てるぞ」

「いいわよ、顔見たかっただけだし」

メルトはベッドの少女を見分する。

「あら、結構かわいいじゃない」

「売り物にならなくて残念だったわね」

「まったくだ」

「牢獄にきてから羽が生えたとあっちゃ返品もできん」

Melt:	「体調はいいのかしら？」
How is she?	
Eris:	「ご飯食べたらの調子。ぐっすり」
She ate, and then fell asleep. She's been sleeping soundly.	
Sieg:	「何か聞き出せたか？」
Did you get anything from her?	
Kaim:	「さっぱりだ。事件のことになると錯乱する」
Not a word. Every time I bring up the incident, she starts acting strange.	
Melt:	「怖い目に遭ったんでしょ？仕方ないわよ」
That's no wonder. It must have been very scary, don't you think?	
Sieg:	「エリス、記憶が戻る薬ってのはないのか？」
Eris, do you have any medicine for memory loss?	
Eris:	「あるけど、何も言わないまま廃人になる確率のほうが高い」
I do, but the likelihood it'll just cripple her before we get anything useful is high.	
Melt:	「そういうのは、最後まで取っておいて」
Let's make that the very last resort.	
She doesn't object entirely. Melt, too, is a product of this city.	使用に反対しないあたり、メルトもこの界隈の女だ。
Sieg:	「何とかならんのか？」
Isn't there anything we can do?	
Eris:	「事件の衝撃で、一時的に混乱しているだけだと思う」
I think it's just a temporary memory loss, caused by the shock of the incident.	



Eris:

If we can alleviate her fear and anxiety, she'll probably recover naturally.

Sieg:

Well then, how about I treat her to one of my famous massages?

Melt:

If it's you giving the massage, it won't feel good at all, though.

Sieg:

Why must you hurt me in this way?

Kaim:

Anyway, saying we 'ease her fears' is easy, but how do you propose we do that?

Melt:

Well, speaking to her gently would be the first step. Can you do that, Kaim?

「緊張や不安が解消されれば、自然に回復するんじゃないかな」

「じゃあ、俺の華麗なマッサージで緊張を」

「ジークの手はなあ、気持ち良くないし」

「こんなに傷つくのはどうしてだろう」

「しかし、緊張をほぐすといっても実際どうする？」

「まずは優しく言葉をかけてあげたら？カイル、できてる？」

Kaim:

I've been nothing but a gentleman.

Melt:

Hm, I wonder.

Kaim:

Once the girl wakes up, you'll see.

Melt:

That's quite some self-confidence there. So then – what's her name?

Kaim:

Eris, what's her name?

Eris:

I don't know.

She answers promptly.

Melt:

What a chivalrous gentleman. Such a wonderful lady.

Melt shakes her head at the two of us.

Melt:

Well, the first thing to do is to make sure that she knows she's not in any danger, and that she's safe with us.

Kaim:

I'm asking for concrete methods here, Melt.

Melt:

Hm, let's see...

Melt:

Why don't you take her out on the town?

「紳士的なもんさ」

「どうかしら？」

「この女が目を覚ませばわかることだ」

「大した自信ね。じゃあ、この子の名前は？」

「エリス、名前は？」

「知らない」

即答だ。

「素敵な紳士淑女なこと」

メルトがやれやれ、という仕草をした。

「まあともかく、まずは危害を加えないことを知ってもらって安心してもらわないと」

「具体的な方法をさっきから聞いてるんだが」

「そうねえ……」

「一緒にお出かけでもしてみたら？」

Melt:

Buy her something sweet, you know. At my shop, naturally.

Sieg:

That might help distract her, certainly.

Kaim:

You want me to parade a Winged around the city?

Kaim:

And what do you suggest I do if something happens?

Melt:

If something happens, well, that's just the time for your skills to come in handy.

Melt:

Play her hero and capture her heart. Every girl likes to be taken care of a little by a man she can depend on.

Eris:

I could stand to be taken care of just a little, you know.

Kaim:

Sorry to hear that.

Sieg:

Come on, we're all cheering for you. Go for it.

Kaim:

If all you're doing is sitting there cheering me on, a dog would be just as good.

Sieg:

Wait, you've seen a cheering dog? Seriously? When was this?!

「甘い物を食べさせてみたり。
あ、もちろんうちのお店でね」

「確かに気が紛れるかもしれん
な」

「羽つきと楽しく遊んでやれ
と？」

「外に出て何かあったらどうす
る？」

「何かあった時こそ腕の見せ所じ
ゃない」

「華麗に助けて乙女心を掴みなさ
いよ。女の子は頼れる男に弱いん
だから」

「ちなみに私は耳が弱いから」

「いらん情報だ」

「なーに、俺達が応援してる。頑
張れ」

「応援だけなら犬でもできる」

「お前、応援してる犬見たことあ
るんか、ええ？いつ見たんだ
よ？」

I slug him in the shoulder to shut him up.

殴って黙らせる。

Melt:

So, bring the girl into a dangerous situation, then save her. Simple enough!

「じゃ、女の子には危ない目に遭ってもらって、それを助けるってことで」

Kaim:

What's 'simple' about that?

「じゃ、じゃねえ」

Eris:

I can't support any plan that puts Kaim in danger.

「カイクに危ないことさせるのは賛成できない」

Kaim:

If you want to do it, by all means.

「よし、お前が代わりに……」

Eris:

Nope.

「嫌」

Kaim:

I don't think you're quite pulling your weight here.

「お前、無責任すぎるぞ」

Eris:

Don't praise me too much, now.

「あんまり褒めないで」

She gives me a dazzling smile as she replies.

眩しい笑顔で言われた。

Sieg:

Well, it's better than nothing. Give it a go, at least.

「何もしないよりはマシだ。試しにやってみてくれ」

Sieg:

And I don't care if you happen to give her a go on the way, either.

「途中で、食っちまっても構わん」

Kaim:

I'm set for women, thanks.

「女は間に合ってる」

Eris:

News to me.

「それ新情報」

Kaim:

Do you have to poke at every little thing?

Sieg taps the tabletop twice with a finger.

Sieg:

Speaking seriously...

Sieg:

As far as I'm concerned, the only purpose of this is to get out of her what you can.

Kaim:

And so you're having me babysit?

Sieg:

Think of it as keeping surveillance on a person of interest.

Melt:

Oh, what an official turn of phrase!

Eris:

You can do it, Kaim. You can do anything if you try.

Not even she sounds like she believes that.

Melt:

If she gets hungry, you can bring her to me anytime, whether we're open or not.

Melt:

If she needs a girl to talk to, I think I can do that, too.

This sounds like a pain in the ass, but I have some questions myself, about that light from before.

If my intuition is right and the girl's just pretending to have forgotten the incident, Sieg

「いちいち反応するな」

ジークが、指先で机を二度叩く。

「真面目な話だが.....」

「こちらとしては、できるだけ情報を引き出せるようにしてほしい」

「いい歳してガキのお守りか」

「こう考えろ、重要参考人の監視業務だ」

「おー、建設的な意見じゃない」

「カイルならできる。やればできる子」

まったく誠意が感じられない。

「営業でも何でもなく、食事はうちでしたらいいわ」

「女の子の相手もしてあげられると思うし」

面倒な話だが、俺としても例の光についての情報は欲しい。

俺の勘が当たっていて、少女が事件のことを忘れたふりをしている

taking care of her would be worse than her having truly forgotten.

It'd be best to stay near her and keep watch, so no problems of any kind arise.

Kaim:

No choice, huh...

I feign bad grace and accept my assignment.

Kaim:

Just for the record, the only ones who know this girl is Winged are we four, right?

Sieg:

Right.

Kaim:

Alright. Let's make sure it doesn't get any farther than this room.

Eris doesn't really give the time of day to anyone outside the three of us, and Melt's ability to keep a secret is part of her job.

Shouldn't be a problem.

Melt:

Well, Kaim, how many days do you think it'll take you to get the girl to fall for you?

Kaim:

It's my policy to get annoying things done with as fast as possible.

Melt:

Oh, more self-confidence, I see.

Melt:

Well then, I'll be waiting for you at the bar.

としたら、完全に忘れてるより始末が悪い。

問題を起こさないよう、傍で監視する人間がいた方がいいだろう。

「仕方ないな」

しぶしぶ、という素振りです承する。

「念のため確認するが、女が羽つきだと知ってるのはこの4人か？」

「ああ」

「わかった。これ以上話が広がらないよう注意してくれ」

エリスはこの場にいる3人以外とはほとんど話さないし、メルトの口の堅さは商売柄鉄板だ。

問題ないだろう。

「さ〜て、カイムは何日で女の子を落とせるかしら」

「面倒事はさっさと終わらせるさ」

「はっはあ。そりゃまた大した自信じゃない」

「じゃ、お店で待ってるから」

Eris:

I'll be heading home as well. Dealing with children always tires me out.

Sieg:

I'm looking forward to a positive report, Kaim.

The door creaks closed.

Off they go.

What a noisy bunch.

Girl:

Mmh...

The girl turns over in her sleep.

Things have turned out troublesome, all because she can't remember something clearly.

Kaim:

Geez...

I pull the chair out and sit, taking a drink of wine without bothering to dig out any food.

I heave a sigh.

The burn of the alcohol is starting to come through strong in this bottle.

I'll go to Melt's tomorrow and buy some new stock.

I look at the sleeping girl.

...might as well bring her with me.

The sole survivor of a massacre.

Someone who refused to die.

In a way, she's just like me.

「私も帰る。子供の相手で疲れた」

「いい報告を待ってるぞ」

がちやり

3人が出て行った。

とことん騒がしい奴らだ。

「う、う～ん……」

女が寝返りを打つ。

こいつの記憶がはっきりしないせいで、面倒なことになってしまった。

「まったく」

椅子に座り、肴もなしにワインを啣る。

「ふう……」

ワインの酸味が大分増してきた。

明日は、メルトのところに新しい酒を仕入れに行こう。

寝ている少女を見る。

……こいつも連れて行くのか。

惨劇の生き残り。

死に損ない。

ある意味、俺と同類だ。

Right now, she might be reliving the horror in her dreams.

Why did either of us have to go through such terrible events?

What meaning was there in either of us being involved in those tragedies?

The answer's simple.

There was no reason to it, and no meaning at all.

Is it unfair?

Yeah, it sure is.

Life is never going to be fair, not in this world.

That's why what people need most is the strength to shoulder that unfairness and move on.

Without demanding a reason, or wanting to know why.

The strength to accept what happens as cold, hard reality, and not to get attached to anyone or anything.

It took a while, but that's the conclusion I've reached.

I wonder how long it'll take her to learn?

今頃は、夢の中で煩悶しているのかもしれない。

なぜ自分がこんな目に遭わなければならないのか。

自分が巻きこまれた悲劇にどれほどの意味があったのか。

答えは簡単だ。

理由も意味もない。

理不尽？

そう、理不尽なのだ。

泣いても笑っても、理不尽な出来事はこの世から消えない。

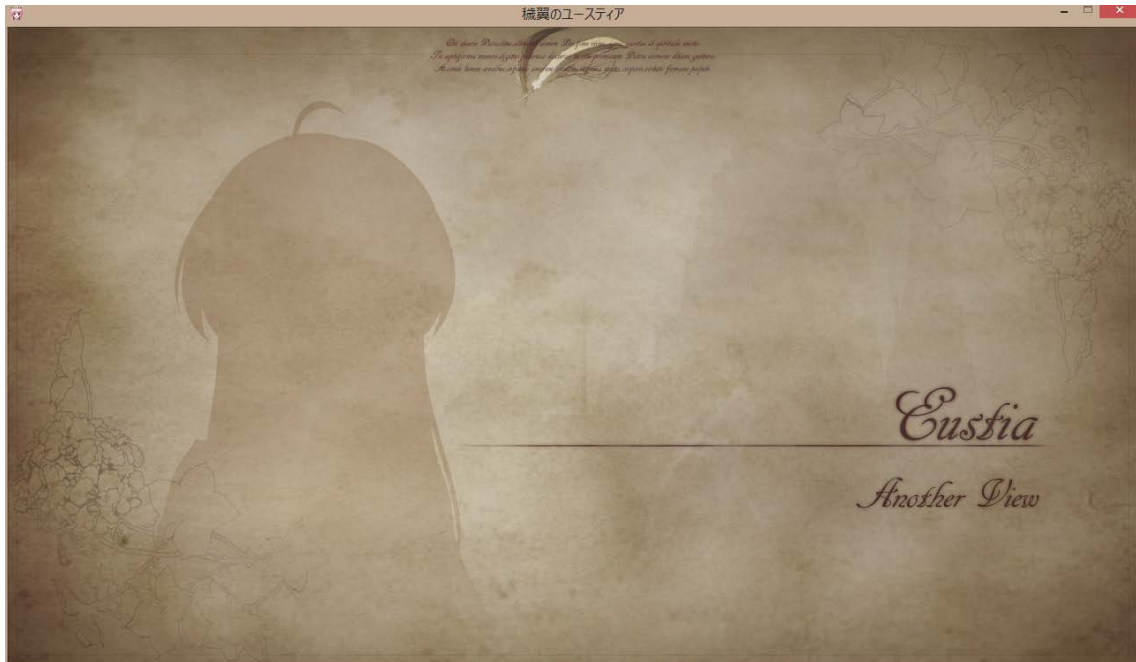
だから、人に必要なのは理不尽さを受け入れる強さだ。

理由も意味も求めない。

ただ、目の前の事実を事実として受け入れ、執着しない強さだ。

少々時間はかかったが、俺はこの結論に辿り着いた。

こいつは、いつ答えを見つけるのだろうか？



Melt:

「じゃ、お店で待ってるから」

Well then, I'll be waiting for you at the bar.

Eris:

「私も帰る。子供の相手で疲れた」

I'll be heading home as well. Dealing with children always tires me out.

Sieg:

「いい報告を待ってるぞ」

I'm looking forward to a positive report, Kaim.

The door creaks closed.

がちゃり

Girl:

「.....」

...

Aside from the man called Kaim, it looks like they've all left.

カイクという男の人以外は出て行ったようだ。

It seems that these people want to know more about yesterday night.

この人たちは、わたしから昨日の夜のことを聞きたがってるみたいだ。

I've been pretending not to remember, but...

とっさに覚えていないふりをしたけど――

I wonder if it might be best to tell them everything after all.

But I have to wonder what will happen to me after I speak up.

Maybe they'll find me someplace to work?

No, not likely.

I'm a Winged now.

No one in the city would hire me.

In that case...

I'll be discarded, to be found and carried away by the Wing Hunters.

That sounds more realistic.

Girl:

No...

I don't want to think about this painful subject anymore.

That's right.

I can't tell them what I know.

I need to pretend I've forgotten, buy what time I can, and sound out the feelings of this man called Kaim.

He... might even actually be a good person.

Girl:

...

やっぱり、全部教えてしまったほうがいいのかな。

でも、話してしまったらわたしはどうなるんだろう。

お勤め先を探してくれたりするんだろうか？

いや、そんなわけない。

わたしはもう、羽つきなんだ。

働くことなんてできない。

だとしたら.....

捨てられて、羽狩りに見つかって、どこかへ連れて行かれる。

ありそうな話。

「（いや.....）」

もうこれ以上、辛くて苦しい思いはしたくない。

そうだ。

わたしが知ってることは話しちゃいけない。

忘れたふりをして、できるだけ時間を稼いで、カイクという人の気持ちを調べるんだ。

も、もしかしたらいい人かもしれないし。

「.....」

I know that would be the best-case scenario for me, but somehow, it makes me feel bad.

理屈ではそうするのが一番だと分かっているのに、なんだか嫌な気分になる。

I'll be deceiving him, after all.

カイクさんという人を騙してるみたいだからかな。

I've lived my life until now being taken advantage of, but even so, taking advantage of other people feels wrong.

ずっと人に利用されて生きてきたのに、自分が人を利用するのは気持ち悪い。

But I have to do something.

何とかしなくちゃいけないのに。

Ah...

ああ.....

I wonder if I really am just fated for misfortune and suffering, after all.

やっぱりわたしは、不幸な人生しか送れない運命なのかな。

APPENDIX 5

PASSING THE HUNTER (Act 2, p. 10 – 18)

As part of Kaim's bid to gain the girl's trust and help her remember the night of the attack, Kaim has learned her name – Eustia, shortened to Tia – and has agreed to take her to Melt's pub for lunch. While walking through the brothel district to Violeto, Tia comments on the storefronts.

Claudia, Risa and Iris are three of Kaim's acquaintances, girls who work at Lilium, the most well-known brothel in the district and the headquarters of the Golden Chain.



Tia:

B-by the way, all the shops on this street are so pretty!

Tia:

Which one are we going to?

Tia forcibly changes the subject.

Most of the storefronts around here are brothels.

「と、ところで、このあたりは綺麗なお店がいっぱいありますね」

「どのお店に行くんですか？」

無理矢理、話題をそらすティア。

周囲の店は、ほとんどが娼館だ。

It's like she has absolutely no idea where she's standing.

Kaim:

Good question... how about that one?

I point out Lillium.

Tia:

That one's the loveliest of them all... won't it be expensive?

Kaim:

Downright cheap, for the work they do.

Tia:

I – I see.

Kaim:

It's a good place. They've got a bunch of women to suit your tastes.

Tia:

Huh?

Kaim:

And they're all well-disciplined, too.

Tia:

What? Huh? Um...

Kaim:

That's the place you would've been working at.

Tia:

Oh...

She understands.

Her expression grows serious, and she looks down at her feet.

ここがそういう場所のど真ん中だとは思っていない様子だ。

「そうだな.....あそこにしよう」

リリウムを指さす。

「一番立派なお店ですけど.....高いんじゃ」

「奉仕の質を考えれば安いぐらいだ」

「そ、そうですか」

「いい店だぞ、個性的な女が揃ってる」

「え？」

「羨もしっかりしている」

「え？は？あの？」

「お前が働くはずだった店だ。あれは」

「ああ」

納得。

といった顔をしてから、真顔になり、俯く。

Kaim:	「この辺の店は、全部そうだ」
All the places around here are the same.	
Tia:	「はい……」
I see...	
Kaim:	「飯は、この先にある知り合いの店で食う」
We'll be eating at a little place just up the road run by a friend of mine.	
Kaim:	「行くぞ」
Let's go.	
I turn and start walking.	先に立って歩きだす。
However, Tia doesn't move.	だが、ティアは動かない。
Kaim:	「おい」
Hey.	
She's staring down at the ground.	じっと俯いている。
She looks kind of depressed.	落ち込んだらしい。
Kaim:	「すまない。冗談が過ぎた」
Sorry. I took the joke too far.	
Tia:	「いえ、大丈夫です」
No... I'm alright.	
She sure as hell doesn't sound it.	まったく大丈夫な声ではない。
Kaim:	「さ、美味しいものを食って気晴らしだ」
Come on. You'll feel better with something tasty in you.	
Just as I try to urge Tia on,	と、ティアを促した時、
I see something bad further down the road.	視線の先に嫌なものを見つけた。
A single man in uniform is walking this way, scowling at everything he passes.	制服に身を包んだ男が一人、周囲を睨めつけながらこちらへ歩いてくる。

A Wing Hunter.

Tia:

That's... a Wing...

Tia:

Wh-what should I...?

Kaim:

Keep calm.

Tia:

R-r-right...

The color's vanished completely from Tia's face.

That, and the way she's moving, make her look like some kind of broken doll.

She might as well be screaming 'I'm suspicious' with every breath.

Kaim:

If you don't want to get a lot friendlier with him, calm down.

Kaim:

If you catch his eye, he'll strip you right here in the street.

Tia:

That's... ridiculous.

Kaim:

The higher-ups turn a blind eye, it seems.

Kaim:

You understand me, right? If he notices you, it's over.

Tia:

羽狩りだ。

「あれは.....羽.....」

「わ、わたしどうしたら.....」

「気にするな」

「は、は、は、はい.....」

ティアの顔からは完全に血が引いている。

身体の動きも壊れた人形のように。

これでは、怪しんでくれと言っているようなものだ。

「奴らとお近づきになりたいくなかったら普通にしている」

「目をつけられたら、その場で服を脱がされるぞ」

「そんな.....乱暴です」

「上から許されてるらしい」

「わかるか？お前は、目をつけられたら終わりってことだ」

「でも、でも」

But... but...

Kaim:

「怖くても笑え」

Even if you're scared, smile.

Kaim:

「できなければこの場に置いていく」

If you can't, here's where we part ways.

Tia:

「は、はは、はい」

R-r-right.

Tia:

「え、えへ.....えへへ」

Eh... hehe... Ehehe...

Kaim:

「.....」

Heh.

It's a sorry excuse for a smile, but it'll have to do.

ふやけたパンみたいな顔だが、まあ及第点だ。

Kaim:

「行くぞ」

Let's go.

Tia:

「えへへ」

Ehehe.

The Wing Hunter's already pretty close by now.

羽狩りはもうそこまで迫っていた。

He's walking right toward us with a steely look on his face.

鋭い眼光を俺達に向けてくる。

Our eyes meet...

目が合った。

...and then our gazes naturally pass over each other.

自然に目を逸らす。

Kaim:

「.....」

...

Tia:

「.....」

...

Then we're past him.

羽狩りとすれ違った。

Not that I could really say how.

I felt his gaze all over our bodies, but that was it.

Instead of wondering needlessly, we carry on ahead.

When I glance at Tia out of the corner of my eyes, she looks completely calm despite how nervous she was before.

Thin Wing Hunter:

Hey, you over there.

A cold voice rings out from behind us.

A chill runs down my spine.

No time to be cursing our bad luck, though.

First we have to deal with our little friend.

Kaim:

...

I take a deep breath and turn around.

And there I see the Wing Hunter, accosting three of the ladies from Lillium.

Somehow it seems we weren't the ones he was after.

別にどうということはない。

視線が身体を舐めるのを感じたが、それだけだ。

余計なことは考えず、ただ前に進む。

横目でティアを確認すると、やや強張ってはいるものの、落ち着いた表情で歩いていた。

「そこのお前ら」

背後から冷たい声が聞こえた。

背筋をひやりとした感覚が走る。

不運を嘆いている暇はない。

まずは現状を打開することが先決だ。

「.....」

意を決して振り返る。

目に入ったのは、リリウムの三人を引き止める羽狩りの姿だった。

どうやら、お目当ては俺たちではなかったようだ。



Claudia:

Do you have some business with us, good sir?

「私どもに何か御用でしょうか？」

Thin Wing Hunter:

I have a few questions for you.

「聞きたいことがある」

Thin Wing Hunter:

There are rumors of Winged being sheltered in this area... have you heard anything about that?

「この辺で羽つきが匿われているという噂があるんだが、何か知らないか？」

Claudia:

Here in the pleasure district, you say?

「娼館街で、ですか.....」

Claudia:

I must beg your pardon, sir, but I simply cannot recall hearing anything of the sort.

「申し訳ございませんが、存じ上げません」

Thin Wing Hunter:

Really?

「本当か？」

Claudia:

「もちろんでございます。羽狩りの方に嘘は申しません」

Most certainly, honored sir. I would never lie to a member of the Wing Hunters.

Thin Wing Hunter:

So you say, but I wonder. We've taken in so few Winged from around here, after all...

Thin Wing Hunter:

Surely makes it hard to believe you.

Claudia:

Surely you are joking, sir.

Thin Wing Hunter:

Not at all. You and your ilk deceive men for a living, don't you?

He suddenly starts looking belligerent.

Looks like he was really just looking to pick a fight with some brothel girls.

Probably payback for some girl who spurned him, I bet.

「その割に、この辺は妙に保護数が少なくてなあ」

「お前らが嘘をついてるようにしか見えんのさ」

「ご冗談を」

「いや、そもそもお前らは、男を惑わすのが仕事だろう？」

いきなり喧嘩を売る羽狩り。

どうやら、女に絡みたかっただけのようだ。

成績が上がらない憂さ晴らしだろう。



Risa:

No, no, no, no, no! Don't you worry about that!

Risa:

The only men we deceive are our paying customers and good men, and you're not either.

Thin Wing Hunter:

What?!

The Wing Hunter's face goes red.

Kaim:

Risa, you little moron, don't pick a fight...

Tia:

Do you know those women?

Kaim:

A bit.

Normally I'd step in at this point, but with Tia around, my hands are tied.

Claudia:

We beg your gracious pardon, sir.

Claudia bows gracefully before the Wing Hunter, whose expression doesn't change.

After a moment, Claudia peeks cautiously up at him.

Even that's a carefully calculated movement.

Thin Wing Hunter:

Hmph... well, whatever.

「いやいやいやいや、安心して
ダ・イ・ジョ・ウ・ブ」

「あたしたち、惑わすのは、お客
と『いい男』って決めてるから」

「何だと!？」

羽狩りが気色ばんだ。

「リサのやつ、喧嘩売ってるな」

「お知り合いですか？」

「少し」

いつもなら仲裁に入るところだ
が、こっちにはティアがいて動け
ない。

「申し訳ございません。何卒ご容
赦のほどを」

美人に深々と頭を下げられ、羽狩
りがわずかにたじろぐ。

とどめとばかり、クローディアは
上目遣いに羽狩りの顔を窺った。

さすがクローディア、計算された
動きだ。

「ふ、ふん。まあいい」

Thin Wing Hunter:

And what about you? Have you heard any rumors?

「そっちのお前はどうか？何か噂を聞いてないか？」



Iris:

As if, you pompous shit.

Kaim:

Ooh.

Tia:

Ah...

I saw that coming.

She's ruined the whole thing in a single instant.

Thin Wing Hunter:

H-how dare you, you little whore?!

Iris:

Go to hell.

「知るかダボ」

「.....」

「わあ.....」

さすがアイリス。

すべてを一瞬で破壊した。

「貴様っ、娼婦の分際でっ」

「くたばれ」

Thin Wing Hunter:

「お、お……」

Y...y...

The Wing Hunter stands shaking and speechless with rage.

羽狩り、身体を震わせ絶句。

Claudia, looking flustered, interrupts.

慌ててクロードィアがとりなす。

Claudia:

Our sincere apologies, sir. She was raised in the Prison, and does not know how to properly address her betters.

「この娘は牢獄育ちでして、目上の方への口の利き方を知りません」

Claudia:

I will be sure to discipline her soundly when we return home.

「後ほどきつく言い聞かせますので」

Claudia once again lowers her head before the Wing Hunter.

再び頭を下げるクロードィア。

Iris:

「……」

...

Iris stands off to the side as Claudia deals with the embers she's stirred back up... and stares directly at the two of us.

その脇で、派手に火種を巻いたアイリスは、俺達をじっと見ている。

APPENDIX 6

THE CHOICE MECHANIC (Act 2, p. 19 – 21)

Proceeding directly from the previous excerpt, this short scene showcases the choice mechanic in *Eustia of the Tarnished Wings*. At certain points, the reader is presented with two choices; these choices do not cause the narrative to branch off, but can result in different dialogue. Most significantly, the choices the player makes can affect whether the few significant choice points that do split the narrative appear.

I turn and walk away without her.

先に立って歩きだす。

Tia hurries to catch up with me, but stares at the ground like she wants to say something.

慌ててついてきたティアだが、何か言いたげに俯いている。

Kaim:

If you've got something to say, spit it out.

「言いたいことがあるなら言え」

Tia:

Ah, no, it's nothing.

「あ、いえ、結構です」

Tia shows a measure of restraint for once.

遠慮するティア。

Even so, she keeps looking at me like she wants to talk.

にもかかわらず、言わねば気が済まないような顔をしている。

This girl's a handful.

手間がかかる女だ。



Kaim:

No need to hold back. I won't get mad, so go ahead.

Tia:

O-okay.

Tia:

Um... which would have been better, do you think?

Tia:

Between working in a brothel, or becoming Winged...

Kaim:

Heh...

What a stupid question.

She's just trying to convince herself that becoming Winged was a better fate for her, in the end.

Still, I do have to curry favor with her, at least for a while.

「遠慮するな。怒らないから言ってみろ」

「は、はい.....」

「あの、どちらが良かったのでしょうか？」

「娼館で働くのと、羽つきになるのでは」

「.....」

下らない話だ。

単に、羽つきになったほうがマシだったと思いたいだけなのだろう。

しかしまあ、しばらくはこいつの機嫌は取らねばならない。



<CHOICE 1> Humor Her/Don't Humor Her ---

Choice 1: Humor Her

Kaim:

Being Winged is probably the better option, yeah.

Tia:

Right... it is, isn't it?

Tia's expression brightens a little.

Though I think we both know they're more or less the same.

機嫌を取る

「羽つきになったほうが、まだマシだろう」

「そう.....そうですね」

ティアの表情が少し晴れる。

どちらも五十歩百歩だということを知っているのだろうか。

Choice 2: Don't Humor Her

Kaim:

They're both horrible.

Tia:

Uh... r-right. They are, aren't they...

機嫌を取らない

「どっちも最悪だ」

「う.....そう、ですね」

Both choices reconvene here.

Kaim:

Well, you're working hard in your own way.

Tia:

It's alright. I'm used to hardship, after all.

Tia smiles quietly as she speaks.

Like hell she is.

After all, if she was used to it, she wouldn't even notice that it was hardship.

There's a glaring contradiction in terms in her words.

「ま、頑張るんだな」

「大丈夫です、わたし苦しいのは慣れてますから」

そう言って、ティアは穏やかな笑顔を浮かべる。

本当に慣れているわけがない。

そもそも、慣れていることならば苦しいとは感じない。

ティアの言葉には決定的な矛盾がある。

My guess is that it's just something she tells herself in order to get through the day.

自分にそう言い聞かすことでしか、毎日を耐え抜くことができなかったのだろう。

Tia:

I'm sure by now that suffering misfortune is my fate.

「わたしは、きっとひどい目に遭う運命なんです」

Tia:

So really, if I let every little thing bother me, I would never be able to stop.

「だから、いちいち気にしていたら切りがありませんから」

Kaim:

I guess it's easier to think like that, yeah.

「そう思った方が楽だろうな」

Tia:

...It is.

「.....はい」

Her smile deepens, and her answer almost sounds like a sigh.

微笑を湛え、ため息のような返事をした。

Even if it's not a happy life, she should at least be wishing for a normal one.

こいつだって幸せな.....幸せでなくとも。せめて平凡な生活を送りたいはずだ。

Her answer makes it clear that she knows even that's out of her reach now.

それが適わないことを知っているからこそその返事だった。

Unfair or not, her situation is reality.

不条理だろうが何だろうが、どうしようもない現実がある。

There's nothing she can do to change it, so all she can do is accept it.

変えることができないなら、受け入れるしかない。

That's all there is to say about it.

ただ、それだけの話だ。

APPENDIX 7

THE EARTHQUAKE (Act 3, p. 64 – 73)

After another day out on the town, during which Kaim buys Tia a small necklace and continues to curry favor with her, Kaim goes to report to Sieg that Tia's memory loss has not been reversed. While their trip to the marketplace was an attempt to make Tia relax, an encounter with a slave trader and several close run-ins with the Wing Hunters have left both of them somewhat tense. While Tia and Kaim are both well aware that Sieg's patience is starting to run low, Kaim finds himself worrying about her beyond her usefulness as a source of information.



Kaim:

Anything strange happen while I was out?

Tia:

No sir. Was everything alright on your errand?

Kaim:

We just talked about work. There was nothing to be alright or not alright.

「留守番の間、変わったことはなかったか」

「はい。カイクさんは大丈夫でしたか？」

「仕事の話をしに行っただけだ。大丈夫も何もない」

Tia:

You're quite a handyman, to be on speaking terms with someone from an organization, Mr. Kaim.

She looks at me worriedly.

It looks like she more or less understands what I do now.

Kaim:

Looks like your instincts might not be so accurate, eh?

Kaim:

You said I was a 'good person' before, right?

Kaim:

Pretty far off the mark, weren't you?

Tia:

Th-that's not true.

It's a strong outburst, for Tia.

Tia:

You're a good person, Mr. Kaim.

Tia:

Even now, you're letting me stay in your home.

But that's just for the value in her memories, and nothing more.

Tia:

I don't care what kind of work you do, Mr. Kaim.

Tia:

Because I know you're good deep down, where it really matters.

「組織の方とお話するような、なんでも屋さんなんですね、カイクさんは」

心配そうな顔で俺を見る。

どうやら仕事の中身はご理解頂けたようだ。

「お前の勘は当てにならない」

「前に、俺のことを『いい人』だと言っただろ」

「大外れじゃないか」

「そ、そんなことはありません」

ティアにしては強い口調だった。

「カイクさんはいい人です」

「現にこうして、家に置いてくれています」

だがそれは、ティアの記憶に価値があるからに過ぎない。

「わたしは、カイクさんがどんなお仕事をされていても平気です」

「根はいい方だって分かってますから」

A warm smile comes to her face.

Kaim:

And I'm telling you, you're wrong there.

Tia:

A really bad person wouldn't call themselves a bad person.

That's some logic.

I get annoyed.

I lift Tia's chin with a finger.

Kaim:

Is there something you're hoping to gain from flattering me?

When I look directly into her eyes, Tia looks away, as if fleeing my gaze.

温かな笑みを浮かべるティア。

「だから、それが当てにならんと
言っているんだ」

「本当に悪い人は、自分のことを
悪いって言いません」

妙な決めつけをしてきた。

イラッとする。

ティアの顎を指で持ち上げる。

「俺を持ち上げて、何か点を稼ぎ
たい理由でもあるのか？」

瞳を直視すると、ティアは逃げる
ように目を逸らした。



Tia:

...I'm worried.

「不安なんです」

Tia: About what will happen to me after this...	「これから先、わたしがどうなるのか」
Kaim: Just stay here. There's no heart in my words.	「ここにいればいい」 心にもないことを言う。
Tia: Can I?	「いいんですか？」
Kaim: Doesn't matter to me. I have enough money to support one girl.	「構わんさ。女一人養うくらいの金はある」
Tia: Thank you.	「ありがとうございます」
Tia: But why?	「でも、どうしてですか？」
Kaim: You must get it. There aren't that many reasons why a man wants a woman at his side. I pet Tia's head roughly.	「わかるだろ。男が女を側に置く理由は多くない」 ティアの頭を乱暴に撫でる。
Tia: ...	「うう……」
After that, Tia quiets down and lets me pet her.	それっきりティアは黙り、撫でられるがまま。
Every now and then she looks like she wants to say something, but I ignore her.	時折何か言いたげにこちらを見るが、俺は無視する。
If Tia thinks I don't have feelings for her, it'll be a problem.	ティアには、俺に恋愛感情があると思ってもらわなくては困るのだ。
Tia: ...I don't understand.	「……分かりません」

She says it in a high, faint voice.

Tia:

I don't understand why you'd be interested in a woman like me.

Kaim:

Whether you understand or not, I'm interested in you.

Kaim:

Do you not like it?

Tia:

It's not that I don't like it.

A smile comes to her face.

It's a forced smile.

It looks like she still doesn't believe me.

Kaim:

You don't believe me, do you.

Kaim:

Can't be helped; it's only been a few days since we met.

Tia:

No, it's not that... I'm just surprised.

Kaim:

Would it be better if you had some definite proof?

Tia:

Eh?

Kaim:

蚊の鳴くような声で言った。

「どうして、わたしみたいな女を気に入るのか分かりません」

「お前が分からなくても、俺はお前を気に入っている」

「嫌なのか？」

「嫌ではありません」

笑顔を浮かべるティア。

無理に作った笑いだった。

どうやら、まだ俺の言葉を信用していないようだ。

「信じてないようだな」

「仕方ない、出会ってまだ数日だ」

「いえ、そんなことないです……ただ、驚いてしまって」

「何か確かな証拠があった方がいいか？」

「え？」

「証拠だよ、俺がお前を気に入っているっていう」

Proof. Something that says without a doubt
that I'm interested in you.

Tia:

「あ、えーと……うう……」

Ah, um... um...

Tia lowers her head and hugs herself a little.

俯いて縮こまるティア。

Kaim:

「ティア」

Tia.

Tia:

「は、はい……」

Y-yes?

I place my hand on her soft cheek and gently
lift her face.

滑らかな頬に手を当て上を向かせ
る。

When I make our eyes meet, Tia's face goes
bright red.

無理矢理目を合わせると、ティア
の顔が真っ赤に染まった。

A rumble is audible far away.

遠くから地鳴りが聞こえた。

Kaim:

「……この音は」

...that sound...

Tia:

「？」

?

The building begins to shake.

建物が軋んだ。

Tia:

「きゃあっ」

Kyah?!

Kaim:

「くっ」

Kh!

Tia:

「じ、地震！？」

A-an earthquake?!

The sights of that day begin to flood back into
my mind.

脳裏をあの日の光景が走り抜け
る。

It's alright.

大丈夫。

I'm alright.

So I keep telling myself, but every muscle in my body is straining tight with tension.

I can't escape the fear and despair dyed deep into my very bones.

Tia:

Mr. Kaim!

Kaim:

It's alright. These tremors aren't...

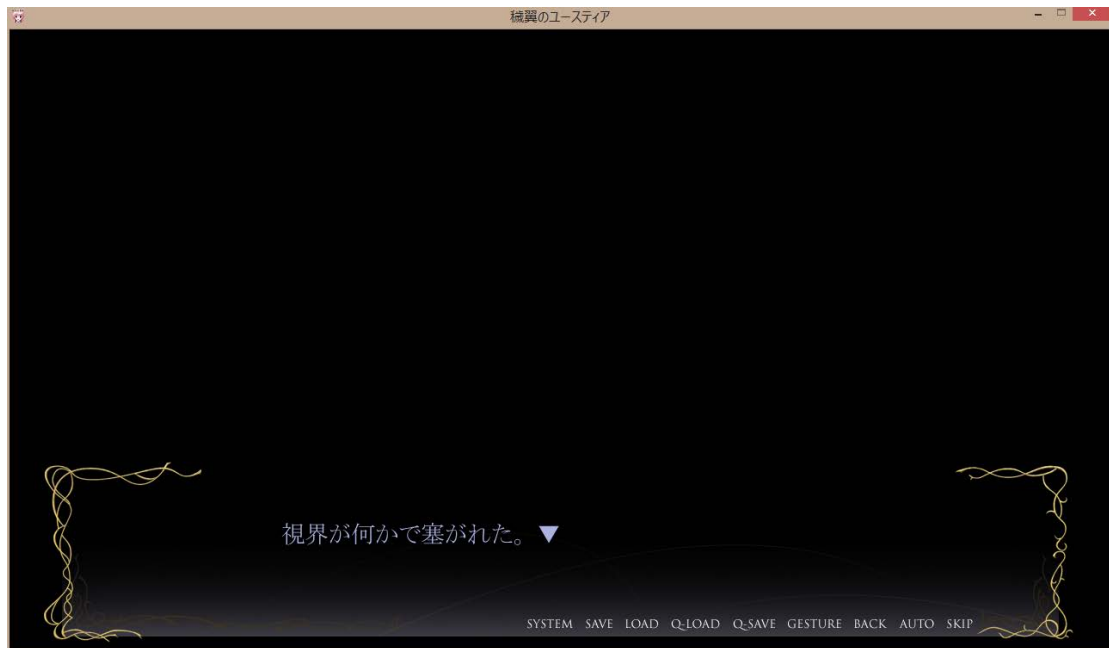
大丈夫だ。

自分に言い聞かせるが、関節という関節が緊張に強張っていく。

骨の髄まで染みこんだ恐怖と絶望が、まだ抜けきらない。

「カイクさんっ」

「大丈夫だ、大した揺れじゃ……」



Something blocks my field of vision.

It takes me a moment to understand what's happened.

...

I'm being embraced by Tia.

Her sweet scent seems to filter through my whole body.

視界が何かで塞がれた。

状況の把握に時間を要する。

……。

俺はティアに抱かれているのだ。

鼻から入った甘い香りが体に染みこんでいく。

She's not wearing perfume; it's just the natural smell of a woman.

It's been a very long time.

Comes from having lived my whole life since the Gran Forte surrounded by perfumes and face powders.

The last time I smelled the natural scent of a woman was probably...

...my mother?

Tia:

The tremors... have stopped.

Kaim:

...

Her embrace eases a little.

Tia:

Are you alright, Mr. Kaim?

Kaim:

Is something...?

Tia:

Oh, no, but you looked so tense, I wondered if you were afraid of earthquakes, perhaps...

Kaim:

Just a little bit of nervousness. Usually they only happen once a month or so.

Kaim:

Get off of me already. I can't breathe.

Tia:

Ah, I'm sorry.

香水によらない、生来の女の匂い。

ずいぶん久しぶりだ。

《大崩落》からこっち、香水と白粉に囲まれて生きてきたせいだ。

最後に嗅いだ生の女の匂いは、恐らく.....

母親か。

「揺れが.....止まりました」

「.....」

俺を抱き締める力が弱くなった。

「大丈夫ですか、カイクさん？」

「何が」

「いえ、顔が強張ってらしたので、地震が怖いのかと」

「多少緊張するだけだ。大体、月に一度は揺れてるんだぞ」

「いいから放せ、暑苦しい」

「あ、すみません」



Tia lets go of me.

Kaim:

Still, the Saint these days sure is careless.

Tia:

I know... We get tremors a lot.

There's some kind of commotion outside the door.

Tia:

Was anything destroyed, do you think?

Kaim:

Take a look outside.

I move past Tia and open the door.

ティアから解放された。

「しかし、最近の聖女様は怠慢だな」

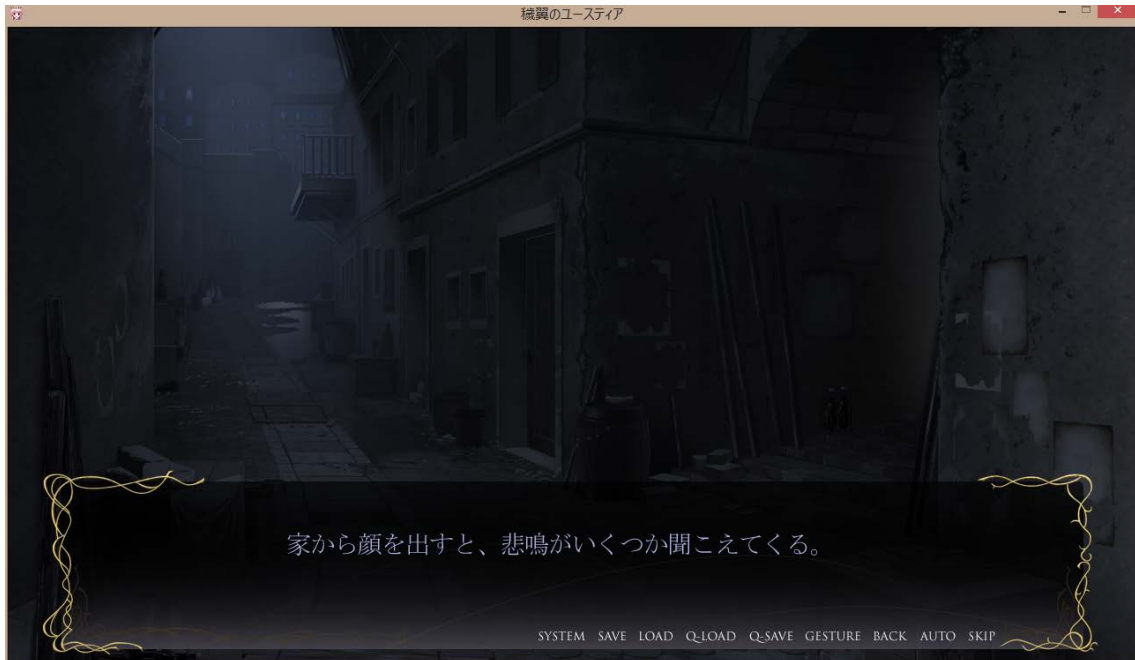
「ですねえ。よく揺れてます」

戸外から、騒ぎが聞こえてきた。

「被害があったんでしょうか？」

「外を見てみろ」

ティアを促し入口の扉を開く。



When I stick my head out, screams are filling the air.

There don't appear to be any fires or collapsed buildings, at least.

Tia:

??

Kaim:

There doesn't seem to be any physical damage, at least.

Kaim:

Sometimes people just go crazy.

Tia:

Eh?

Kaim:

Pretty much everyone in the Prison suffered during the Gran Forte.

Kaim:

Earthquakes call those memories back.

家から顔を出すと、悲鳴がいくつか聞こえてくる。

火事や家屋が倒壊している様子は見られない。

「??」

「物理的な被害はないんだがな」

「たまに頭がいられる奴がいるんだ」

「え？」

「牢獄にいる奴は、ほとんどが《大崩落》で被害を受けてる」

「地震がその記憶を呼び覚ますんだよ」

Kaim:

There are more than a few people who just go crazy with these little earthquakes as the trigger.

The indelible memories of the Gran Forte,

Hatred against a Crown that abandoned us,

The poverty and violence that consumes their daily lives...

All of these together are probably the driving spirit of everyone living in the Prison.

Tia:

But you're alright, aren't you, Mr. Kaim?

Kaim:

It was causing trouble in my work, so I got over it.

Kaim:

To the people living down here in the Prison, the Gran Forte hasn't ended.

Tia:

I think I understand.

Tia:

I feel like I somehow know the Gran Forte, too.

Kaim:

Where were you when it happened? The Upper City? Lower City?

Tia:

Um... I don't really remember.

Kaim:

How old were you?

「ちょっとした地震が引き金になって、おかしくなってしまう奴も少なくない」

消えない《大崩落》の記憶、

国から見捨てられた恨み、

日々を蝕む貧しさと暴力、

これらが一体となったものが、恐らく牢獄に生きる人間共通の精神だ。

「カイクさんは大丈夫なんですね」

「仕事の邪魔なんで克服した」

「牢獄で暮らしてる奴らにとって、《大崩落》はまだ終わっていないんだ」

「わかる気がします」

「わたしも《大崩落》のこと、なんとなく知ってますから」

「お前、《大崩落》の時、どこにいた？上層か？下層か？」

「ええと.....よく覚えてません」

「年齢は？」

<p>Tia:</p> <p>That, either...</p>	<p>「それもちよっと」</p>
<p>Kaim:</p> <p>If that's how it is, don't go around saying you understand so lightly.</p>	<p>「そんな状態で、軽々しく知っているなどと言うな」</p>
<p>Kaim:</p> <p>As if you could understand that suffering just from hearing about it.</p>	<p>「聞いただけのことで、あの悲惨さが分かるか」</p>
<p>Tia:</p> <p>B-but I see it in my dreams.</p>	<p>「で、でも、夢で見erんです」</p>
<p>Tia:</p> <p>People falling... and houses crumbling... Dreams, of all things. Is she mocking me?</p>	<p>「人が落ちるところとか.....家が壊れるところとか.....」</p> <p>よりによって夢か。</p> <p>馬鹿にしているのかこいつは。</p>
<p>Kaim:</p> <p>There are things it's not alright to say.</p>	<p>「言っているいいことと悪いことがある」</p>
<p>Kaim:</p> <p>You dreamt about it, so you understand? Don't make me laugh.</p>	<p>「夢で見たから知ってる？冗談じゃない」</p>
<p>Kaim:</p> <p>Say it one more time. Go ahead.</p>	<p>「次、同じことを言ってみろ」</p>
<p>Tia:</p> <p>I-I won't say it again. I take a deep breath and calm down a little.</p>	<p>「も、もう言いません」</p> <p>深呼吸をして気持ちを静める。</p>
<p>Kaim:</p> <p>...</p>	<p>「.....」</p>
<p>Kaim:</p> <p>Anyway, I think you've seen enough.</p>	<p>「さあ、見学はもういいだろう」</p>

APPENDIX 8

THE QUARTERING (Act 3, pp. 75-83)

The day after the earthquake, Kaim and Tia head to Violeto for dinner with Eris and Melt. In the middle of a joking conversation, the situation takes a turn for the worse.

The door opens.

扉が開いた。

Melt:

「いらっしゃい……」

Welcome...

Kaim:

「……」

...

The newcomer looks around the store, then nods quietly to Melt.

新しい客はまず店内をぐるりと見回し、静かに目礼した。



Wing Hunter Captain:

「失礼する」

Pardon me.

Kaim:

「ティア、いつも通りにしてろ」

Tia, just like we always do.

Tia:

「ははは、はい」

R-ri-ri-right.

She's clearly nervous.

Let's hope she doesn't start crying.

Melt:

My sincere apologies, ma'am. The truth is, we're just about to close for this evening...

Melt:

I truly am terribly sorry, but could I ask you to please call again at another opportunity?

Melt's smile doesn't budge as she lies.

Wing Hunter Captain:

That's actually more convenient.

Enunciating clearly, the Wing Hunter captain comes closer.

Wing Hunter Captain:

My name is Fione Silvaria.

Captain Fione:

I'm the captain in charge of the Quarantine Corps in this area.

She extends her hand and gives Melt a handshake over the counter.

Next is Eris.

Then she turns to me.

Captain Fione:

You're... the man from the other day.

Kaim:

What a coincidence, huh.

Captain Fione:

明らかに緊張している。

ボロを出さなければいいが。

「実は、このあと店を閉める予定になっております」

「大変申し訳ございませんが、またの機会にお願いできますでしょうか」

笑顔を崩さずメルトが嘘をつく。

「むしろ好都合だ」

歯切れよく言って、羽狩りの隊長が近づいてくる。

「私はフィオネ・シルヴァリア」

「この近辺を担当している防疫局の隊長を務めている」

手を伸ばし、カウンター越しにメルトと握手をする。

次にエリス。

そして、俺に向いた。

「貴方は、先日の……」

「奇遇だな」

「ええ。本当に」

Yes, it really is.

I grip the Captain's offered hand.

It's a surprisingly strong, firm hand.

I surreptitiously slip my knife back into my belt with my other hand.

Captain Fione:

And it's a pleasure to meet you, too.

The Captain turns to Tia and extends her hand.

Please.

Just go along with it.

Tia:

Ah, r-r-right...

差し出された隊長の手を握る。

かなり鍛えられた手だ。

腰には入念に手入れされた剣が下がっている。

「貴女もよろしく」

女隊長は、続いてティアに手を出す。

頼む。

無事乗り越えてくれ。

「あ、は、は、は、はい……」



Captain Fione:

Is something wrong?

「どうかしたか？」

<p>Tia: A-ah, um, no, not particularly, nothing.</p>	<p>「あ、あの、いえ、別に、なんでも」</p>
<p>Melt: This young lady had a friend who is currently being looked after by the Wing Hunters, you see.</p>	<p>「この娘、前に友達が羽狩りさんのお世話になってるんです」</p>
<p>Melt: She's a little nervous, that's all.</p>	<p>「それでちょっと緊張しているみたい」</p>
<p>Captain Fione: Ah, I see. Taken in by Melt's story, the Captain smiles and speaks to Tia.</p>	<p>「なるほど」 メルトの話を受けた隊長は、笑顔でティアに語りかける。</p>
<p>Captain Fione: I'm very sorry if we scared you.</p>	<p>「怖い思いをさせたのなら申し訳なかった」</p>
<p>Captain Fione: From now on, we'll be doing our very utmost not to cause unpleasant experiences for anyone.</p>	<p>「以後、不快な思いをさせないよう極力注意する」</p>
<p>Tia: O-okay. The Captain takes Tia's hand and shakes it twice, firmly.</p>	<p>「は、はい」 隊長はティアの手を握ると、力強く2度振った。</p>
<p>Melt: Well then, what brings you here, ma'am?</p>	<p>「それで、どういったご用でしょうか？」</p>
<p>Captain Fione: Ah, pardon me. She straightens up. She has beautiful posture.</p>	<p>「これは失礼」 居住まいを正す女隊長。 美しい姿勢だ。</p>
<p>Captain Fione:</p>	<p>「数刻後に、この近所で羽化病罹患者の保護を行うことになっている」</p>

In a few hours, we'll be effecting the transfer of sufferers of the Feathering Sickness in this area into Quarantine Corps care.

Captain Fione:

If possible, I would like to requisition this building as a temporary headquarters for that purpose.

Melt:

Is there nowhere else?

Captain Fione:

This inn is close to the entrance of the brothel district; it's a convenient location.

Captain Fione:

Of course, I insist on paying the balance of any losses you might incur from our presence.

Captain Fione:

The inn was to be closed tonight anyway, so I don't think it will be that significant a blow, but what do you say?

Melt's dug her own grave.

If she refuses any more, the Captain might start getting suspicious.

Melt glances over to me, and I nod.

Melt:

Yes, of course. Please make yourselves at home.

Captain Fione:

Thank you for your cooperation.

「ついでに、一時こちらを詰め所として使わせて頂きたい」

「他の場所ではいけませんか」

「こちらは娼館街の入口にあって都合が良い」

「もちろん相応の代金は払わせてもらう」

「本日は店を閉めるとのことだし、大きな損害は与えないと思うのだが、いかがだろうか？」

墓穴を掘る形となってしまったメルト。

これ以上断ると怪しまれる可能性がある。

目配せをしてきたメルトに頷く。

「わかりました。お使い下さい」

「ご協力感謝する」

Smiling faintly, she stamps on the floor three times with the heel of her combat boot.

As if it had been waiting for her, the back door opens.

A group of ten men pours into the inn.

Melt:

H-hang on, what do you think you're doing coming in from the back?

Captain Fione:

My apologies. We would have been seen coming in the front door, and blown our cover.

The men aren't wearing Wing Hunter uniforms, but clothes no different from the men on the street.

Disguises, most likely, to make sure they aren't recognized as Hunters.

The men remove their clothes as a group, and underneath are the familiar uniforms.

Twelve Wing Hunters total.

They must be planning one hell of an operation.

Vice-Captain Lang:

I thought I recognized you.

Kaim:

Horrible luck, isn't it?

Vice-Captain Lang:

Truly.

にこりと笑い、女隊長は軍靴の踵で床を３度踏み鳴らす。

待ちかねたように裏口が開いた。

入ってきたのは、１０名前後の男たちだ。

「ちょ、ちょっと裏から何よっ」

「すまない。表は目について都合が悪いのだ」

男たちは羽狩りの制服ではなく、こちらの客と変わらない服装をしている。

羽狩りだと気づかれないための変装だろう。

彼らが揃って服を脱ぐと、下からは見慣れた制服が現れた。

羽狩りの数は１２名。

それなりに大きな作戦のようだ。

「誰かと思ったら君か」

「くじ運が悪いな」

「まったく」



Captain Fione:

Lang, cut the chatter. Get the briefing started.

Vice-Captain Lang:

Understood.

Brushing a loose strand of hair back up, the Vice-Captain passes by my seat.

A faint smell of cologne wafts after him.

Pretty careless for someone who specializes in dirty work to walk around in cologne.

Kaim:

We'll just get in the way. Let's head home.

Tia:

R-right, let's.

I put our money on the counter, then we head for the exit.

「ラング、無駄話は控えろ。すぐに打ち合わせを始める」

「了解」

髪をさらりとかき上げ、副隊長は俺の脇を通り過ぎる。

ふわりと香水の匂いがした。

匂いをつけて歩くとは、荒事屋にしては不用心だ。

「俺達は邪魔になる、帰ろう」

「そ、そうですね」

金をカウンターに置き、俺達は出口へ向かう。

The Captain stands in our way.

Captain Fione:

I'm sorry, but could I ask you to stay here until our operation is over?

Captain Fione:

It's not that I doubt you two, but we can't be sure that you won't report on this to anyone, you see.

Kaim:

We'd hardly dream of opposing the Wing Hunters.

Captain Fione:

We are not Wing Hunters.

Captain Fione:

We're the Quarantine Corps.

She corrects me, her tone flat.

Kaim:

Well, no one in the Prison calls you the Quarantine Corps.

Kaim:

Understanding at least that much would probably make your job a bit easier.

Captain Fione:

Thank you for the advice.

Captain Fione:

But things should be called by their proper names.

Just like a government official to be hung up on the things that don't matter.

その道を隊長が遮った。

「すまないが、作戦が終わるまでここにいてもらえないか」

「疑うわけではないが、貴方がこのことを誰かに報告しないとも言いきれないのでな」

「羽狩りの邪魔などしない」

「我々は羽狩りではない」

「防疫局だ」

きっぱりとした口調で訂正する。

「防疫局って名前は、牢獄じゃ通じない」

「そのくらいわかってたほうが、働きやすくなると思うぞ」

「忠告、痛み入る」

「だが、正式名称は正式名称だ」

役人らしく、どうでもいいことにこだわっているようだ。

Kaim:

Well, anyway, we have no intention of getting in the Wing Hunters' way at all.

Vice-Captain Lang:

In that case, why not stay and serve as a witness that we're earning our pay down here?

Kaim:

Just submit an after-action report.

Vice-Captain Lang:

I'm sorry; that wasn't a request.

Lang taps his finger on the hilt of his sword.

Captain Fione:

Stop it, Vice-Captain.

Vice-Captain Lang:

Scum like this won't listen to words, Captain.

So he says to the Captain, looking directly at me.

But he obeys her order.

Captain Fione:

Thank you for your cooperation.

Kaim:

Not at all. It's an honor to be allowed to watch the Quarantine Corps' work from so close by.

The Captain gives a wry smile at my sarcasm.

Captain Fione:

「ま、ともかく、俺達に羽狩りさんを邪魔する意思はない」

「そう言わず、私たちが給料分働いているか見届けてくれないか」

「事後報告で結構」

「悪いが、お願いしているわけではないんだ」

Langが指先で剣の柄を叩いた。

「そのような態度はやめろ」

「この手の奴らは、話してもわかりません」

隊長に言ってから副隊長が俺を見る。

お手上げの仕草で応じた。

「ご協力感謝する」

「防疫局の仕事を間近で見られて感激だ」

俺の皮肉に苦笑で応える女隊長。

「店主、今すぐ店を閉め、誰も入ってこないようにしてくれ」

Madam, please close the inn straightaway,
and make sure no one else comes in.

Melt:

「わかりました」

Right away.

Melt starts closing up shop.

メルトが戸締まりを始める。

The Wing Hunters push together a few of
the tables to make a bigger one.

羽狩りたちは、テーブルをいくつか
集めて大テーブルを作るようだ。



Tia:

「カイクさん、どうしたら……」

Mr. Kaim, what should we do...?

Kaim:

「取りあえず座れ」

For now, sit down.

Tia:

「は、はい」

R-right.

I sit Tia down. Her face has gone
completely green.

完全に青ざめているティアを座らせる。

Penned in here like this, it's only a matter
of time before they find Tia's wings.

長時間この状態が続けば、いずれテ
ィアの羽は見つかるだろう。

If I can, I want to get her out of here.

なんとか店の外に逃がしてやりたい
が。

I just have to think of a way.

策を考えよう。

APPENDIX 9

EXTRACTION (Act 3, p. 95 – 111)

With the Wing Hunters quartered in Violeto and preparing to begin their raids against the brothel district, tension is high as Kaim attempts to keep their attention off of Tia. In order to distract them and to upset Captain Fione, Eris and Melt drug the Wing Hunters' ale with an aphrodisiac and rile the men up, causing chaos in the pub and creating an excuse to take Tia upstairs with them. Kaim is left alone with the Wing Hunters.



The sun's started to set.

陽が傾き始めた。

With the drug out of their systems, a nervous sort of impatience is spreading among the Wing Hunters.

薬が抜けた羽狩りの間には、焦燥に似た緊張が広がっている。

Seeing them so tense is practically as good as a live show as I down my ale. I lost count of the flagons a while ago.

神経質に装備を確認する男たちの姿を肴に、俺は何杯目かの火酒を飲み干した。

The straight-laced Captain has her hands pressed against her chest and is mumbling something.

生真面目な女隊長は、胸に手を当て口の中で何事が唱えている。

Kaim:

「あんた、何に祈る？」

Who are you praying to?

Captain Fione:

To the Holy Saint... and to my family.

She replies without opening her eyes.

Kaim:

Even though you're about to go rip apart who knows how many families yourself?

Captain Fione:

Without us, the disease would run rampant through this city, and countless more families would be destroyed.

Captain Fione:

It's necessary work.

A by-the-books answer.

Kaim:

Earlier, you said you'd like to ask one of the gangsters out here how it felt to make a living by violence, right?

Kaim:

Surely you lot understand that feeling pretty well already, don't you?

「聖女様.....そして家族に」

瞑目したまま女隊長は言う。

「これから、どこかの家族を壊しに行くのにか」

「我々がいなければ街に病が蔓延し、より多くの家族が壊れる」

「必要な仕事だ」

型どおりの答えだった。

「以前、娼館街のチンピラに、暴力で生活するのはどんな気分か訊きたいと言っていたな」

「あんたらなら、その気持ちはよくわかってるんじゃないか」



Captain Fione:

「愚弄するのか」

Are you mocking me?

Captain Fione:

「我々の暴力は手段であって目的ではない」

Any violence we perpetrate is merely a means, not the objective.

Captain Fione:

「民衆の平穏な生活を保つために、どうしても必要な時があるのだ」

There are times when it's necessary, to protect the peaceful lives of the citizenry.

Kaim:

「そうだと信じているよ」

Oh, yes, I believe that.

The Captain lets out an angry huff and turns away.

女隊長は荒い鼻息をついて、顔を逸らした。

Captain Fione:

「傍から皮肉を言うのは楽でいいな」

It must be easy to sit on the sidelines and spit sarcasm.

She stands up.

女隊長が立ち上がる。

As one, her subordinates stand up as well.

部下達も一斉に席を立った。

Captain Fione:

「状況を開始する」

It's time.

The Captain opens the door to the inn.

The red light of sunset flows into the room, and her body is wreathed in orange fire.

Captain Fione:

I have my feet firmly planted in reality.

Captain Fione:

Unlike you, I don't believe in living in a dream world.

She says it quietly, then turns and steps into the twilight streets of the brothel district.

Her subordinates follow.

The Vice-Captain is last.

Kaim:

Good hunting.

Vice-Captain Lang:

It's *protective custody*.

He corrects me coldly, as if I'd just spoken from misunderstanding, and then the last Wing Hunter leaves the inn.

An empty, still silence is all that's left behind.

Kaim:

Firmly planted in reality... ha.

What a pompous phrase.

If she had that thought up beforehand and was just waiting for a chance to say it, I feel even sorrier for her.

Her feet may be planted in reality, but her head's stuck in the clouds, it seems.

女隊長は店の扉を開け放った。

赤灼の陽光が突如として店に射しこみ、女の身体が逆光に映える。

「私は現実の只中にいる」

「お前と違って、娼館街で生きているわけではない」

静かに言い、女隊長は夕景の娼館街へ出る。

続いて隊員達。

最後は副隊長だ。

「いい狩りを」

「『保護』の間違いだ」

すれ違いざま冷たい声を投げつけ、最後の羽狩りが店を出ていった。

がらんとした静寂に取り残される。

「現実の只中にいる……か」

芝居がかった台詞だ。

いつか言ってやろうと用意していたのなら、相当寂しい女だ。

少なくとも、頭の中身は夢想の只中らしいな。



Eris:

「出て行ったみたいね」

Looks like they've gone.

Melt:

「あー、疲れた」

Ah, I'm exhausted.

Tia:

「こ、怖かったです」

Th-that was so frightening.

The three of them trickle downstairs.

三人が下りてきた。

Kaim:

「何とか切り抜けた」

We made it through somehow.

Tia:

「ありがとうございます、皆さんの
おかげです」

Thank you all so very much. It's all thanks to
you.

Melt:

「私の名演のお陰ね」

It's all thanks to my acting ability, you mean!

Eris:

「羽狩りなんかに身体触られるな
んて、最低」

Being touched by Wing Hunters... how disgusting.

Kaim:

Your medicine really saved us, Eris. It worked surprisingly well.

Eris:

It's specially made, after all.

Eris:

Do you want to know what I made it for?

Kaim:

I really don't.

Eris:

I thought it would put a bit of a spring in your step, Kaim.

Kaim:

If you're just going to tell me anyway, don't ask if I want to know.

Melt:

Oh my, Kaim, you're already depending on medicine? What a shame.

Outside the inn, a woman screams.

Tia:

Ah... that voice...

Kaim:

It's started, then.

Kaim:

I'll go check it out.

Melt:

I'll stay here.

「エリスの薬のお陰で助かった。
意外と効いたな」

「特製だから」

「何のために作ったか知りたい？」

「全く知りたくない」

「カイクに元気になってもらおう
と思って」

「どうせ言うなら聞くな」

「あらカイク、早くも薬に頼って
るんだ。あーあ」

店の外から女の悲鳴らしき声がした。

「あ.....この声」

「始まったな」

「様子を見てくる」

「私は休んでるわ」

Eris:	「羽狩りなんて、もう見飽きた」
I'm tired of looking at those Wing Hunters.	
Tia:	「わたし、見たいです」
I want to see it.	
Kaim:	「ここにいろ」
You stay here.	
Tia:	「お願いします」
Please!	
Tia:	「羽つきがどうなるのか、見てみたいんです」
I want to see... what happens to the Winged.	
Kaim:	「だめだ」
Nothing doing.	
Tia:	「でもでも、自分も羽つきですから」
I mean, I have wings myself!	
There's something earnest in Tia's voice.	ティアの声には切実な響きがあった。
Tia:	「少しだけでもいいんです」
Just for a few seconds. Please.	
Melt:	「遠目に見ている分には、そこまで危なくないんじゃない？」
It won't be too dangerous if she watches from far away, will it?	
Kaim:	「.....」
...	
Eris:	「きっと後悔する」
You're going to regret this.	
Tia:	「それでも、です」
Even so... please.	
Tia's eyes glisten.	ティアの目が潤む。

Kaim:

「面倒な女だな」

Such a troublesome woman.

I turn to the exit.

店の入口へ向かう。

Tia:

「え？」

Eh?

Melt:

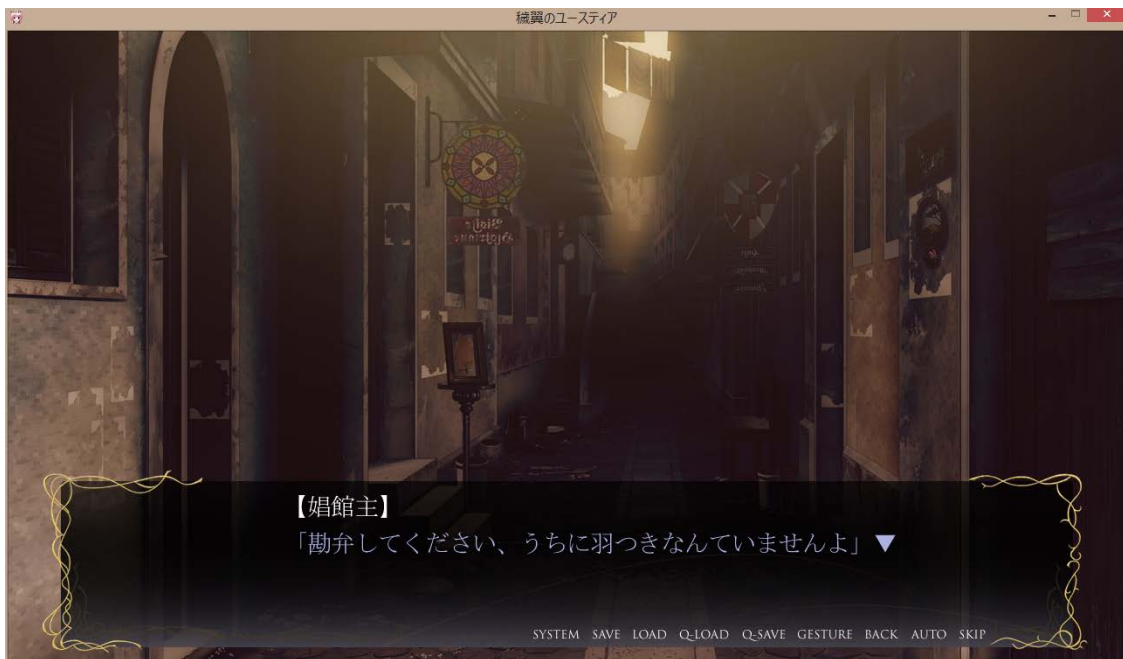
「ついて行ったら」

Go with him.

Tia:

「は、はいっ！」

R-right!



【娼館主】

「勘弁してください、うちに羽つきなんていませんよ」 ▼

Brothel Owner:

「勘弁してください、うちに羽つきなんていませんよ」

I beg your pardon, ma'am. Of course there are no Winged here.

Captain Fione:

「調査させて頂くだけです」

All we're asking is that you permit us to check.

The place the Wing Hunters have set their eyes on is a tiny, filthy brothel in a back alley.

羽狩りが目をつけていたのは、裏通りの小汚い娼館だった。

In the middle of a ring of rubbernecks is the Captain, squaring off with the brothel's owner.

Tia:

What's going to happen?

Kaim:

Be quiet and watch.

Brothel Owner:

There must be some mistake.

Brothel Owner:

We have paying customers here. There's no way we'd let a Winged in, is there?

Brothel Owner:

If rumors spread about this, we're going to lose business.

Captain Fione:

The rumors have already spread. That's why we're here.

Captain Fione:

Sir, undergoing an inspection and certifying that nothing is wrong would be better, don't you think?

There are seven Wing Hunters in front of the building.

There were twelve in Violeto, so the other five are probably already circling around to the back.

Brothel Owner:

Of course I would love to cooperate, but it's business hours right now. Come back tomorrow morning.

Captain Fione:

野次馬が遠巻きに見つめる中、女隊長と娼館の主が対峙している。

「どうなるのでしょうか？」

「黙って見てろ」

「何かの間違いだって」

「うちは客商売なんだから、店に羽つきなんか入れるわけないだろ」

「変な噂が立ったら客が来なくなっちゃう」

「噂はすでに立っている。だから我々が来た」

「ご主人、ここは調査を受け入れて、悪い評判を払拭するのが良いと思う」

表にいる羽狩りは7人。

ヴィノレタには12人いたはずだから、残りの5名は裏口にでも回っているのだろう。

「協力したいのは山々なんだが、今は営業中なんだ……明日の朝にでも」

「それには及ばない」

That won't do.

The Captain tries to enter the building, and the owner pulls her back.

Brothel Owner:

W-well then, at least wait until after the customers enjoying themselves now leave.

Brothel Owner:

After that, you'll have the run of the place.

Vice-Captain Lang:

Come now, don't say that.

The Vice-Captain grabs the owner's shoulders.

Vice-Captain Lang:

The back entrance is covered already. Don't bother trying to buy time.

Brothel Owner:

Rgh...

Captain Fione:

Go.

At her command, the Wing Hunters burst into the brothel.

Brothel Owner:

Stop it!

The sounds of smashing furniture, shattering pots and plates, women's screams—

A riot of sound pours out of the brothel.

Tia stands watching it, looking like she's forgotten how to breathe.

Vice-Captain Lang:

建物に入ろうとする女隊長を、娼館の主が引き留める。

「な、なら、今お楽しみのお客に出て行ってもらってからにしよう」

「その後で存分に調べてくれ」

「まあ、そう言うな」

副隊長が主の両肩を掴んだ。

「裏口はもう塞いでる。時間稼ぎは無駄だ」

「うっ」

「行け」

女隊長の声と同時に、羽狩りが娼館になだれ込んだ。

「やめろ、お前らっ！！」

家具が倒れる音、器が割れる音、女の悲鳴——

娼館から激しい物音が聞こえてきた。

そんな光景を、ティアは息をするのも忘れて見つめている。

「お前、羽つきを匿ってやり、高い手間賃を取っていたらしいな」

From what we hear, you've been sheltering
Winged women, and charging rather high sums
for them.

Vice-Captain Lang:

On top of that, you give the women who aren't
selling anymore a special kind of work...

Brothel Owner:

T-that's ridiculous...

Vice-Captain Lang:

Now, don't be upset; I'm praising you.

「おまけに、金が払えなくなった
女に、特殊な仕事をさせてたそう
じゃないか.....」

「ば、馬鹿な」

「怒るなよ、褒めてるんだ」



Vice-Captain Lang:

It's really quite clever. You have a good head
on your shoulders.

The Vice-Captain pets the owner's bald head
like a dog's.

Tia:

Mr. Kaim...

「よく磨いているだけあって、な
かなか頭が回る」

副隊長が、娼館主の禿頭を撫で回
す。

「カイクさん.....」

Tia whispers to me.

Tia:

What exactly is the ‘special work’ he mentioned?

Kaim:

Selling their bodies in a different way. Having their wings broken, for instance.

Tia:

B-broken?

Kaim:

It’s a service for rich perverts. I hear it’s fairly profitable.

Kaim:

Though, make one misstep and this is what happens.

The Wing Hunters come out of the brothel.

They drag their Winged captives out with them, tied up with rope.

There are three, all girls.

One of them has her wings broken pretty badly, and the feathers that were pure white are staining with fresh blood.

The second has been beaten, and her face and body are red and black with darkening bruises.

The third looks to have lost an arm some time ago, and her eyes are empty and dull.

Girl With Broken Wings:

Sir... help us...

Brothel Owner:

ティアが小声で尋ねてくる。

「特殊なお仕事ってなんですか？」

「身体を売ったり、羽を折らせたり、ま、そういうことだ」

「.....お、折る」

「金持ちの変態相手の商売だ。かなり儲かるらしい」

「ま、一步間違えばご覧の通り」

娼館の入口から羽狩りが出てきた。

やや遅れて、縄で捕縛された羽つきが引っ張り出される。

少女ばかりが、3人。

一人は、翼が中程で折れ、純白だった羽根が鮮血に染まっている。

一人は、酷く殴られ、顔や身体は内出血で赤黒い。

最後の一人は、いつ失ったのか片腕がなく、目も虚ろだ。

「旦那.....助けて.....」

「知らん、お前など知らんっ」

Get away! I don't know you!

Captain Fione:

We're prepared to show mercy when people are hiding their family or friends, but this...

Captain Fione:

If these girls are part of your establishment, we'll have to ask about the circumstances of that.

Brothel Owner:

Gh...

The owner falls to his knees in defeat.

He's likely not afraid of the Wing Hunters per se.

No, he's afraid of the punishment he'll get from the Untarnished Golden Chain for stirring up the brothel district.

Captain Fione:

I ask for your cooperation.

Captain Fione:

There's no need to worry. We will not use force.

Brothel Owner:

Ah...

In the second that the Captain extends her hand to him,

Brothel Owner:

Rraaaaaah!

The man's hand shoots for her unguarded throat.

Something glints in his fist.

「家族を匿う分には、我々も大目に見るが.....」

「商売にしていたとなれば、事情を聞かねばならないな」

「く.....」

娼館の主が失意に膝をつく。

羽狩りが恐ろしいのではないだろう。

間違いなく、奴は娼館街を騒がせた責任を問われて《不蝕金鎖》から制裁を受ける。

「同道願おうか」

「心配せずとも、乱暴にはしない」

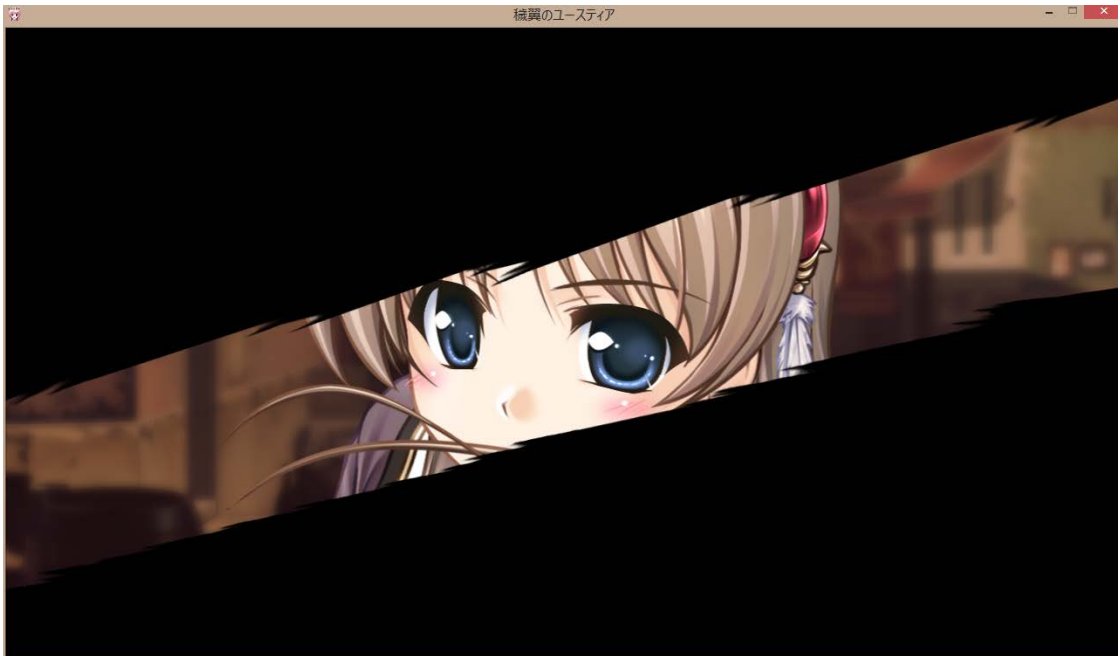
「.....う.....」

女隊長が男に手を伸ばした瞬間、

「うああああっ！！」

男の手が、無防備な女隊長の首に伸びる。

その手には光る物があつた。



There's a thick, wet sound.

鈍い音。

Kaim:

「へえ」

Oh?

Brothel Owner:

「……」

...

Captain Fione:

「……」

...

Something falls before us.

俺達の目の前に、何かが落ちた。

Tia:

「ひっ!？」

Hya?!

It's a man's arm.

飛んできたのは男の腕。

It's a wonderfully neat amputation.

見事な切断面だ。

Brothel Owner:

「うがああああ……あああっ……
ああっ」

Aaaaaaaaaaargh!

The man writhes around on the ground.

男が地面をのたうち回る。

Captain Fione:

That was a foolish thing to do.

The Captain shakes her head as she returns her shortsword to its sheath.

She's pretty good with that thing.

In particular, the speed of her draw was stunning.

Captain Fione:

Citizens of the Prison, thank you for your cooperation.

She speaks to the rubbernecks.

Captain Fione:

Thanks to your support, we were able to take these sufferers of the Feathering Sickness into our care.

Captain Fione:

These girls, freed from their lives of cruel bondage, can now focus on rest and recovery.

Captain Fione:

If you should happen to see any more of the affected after this, we ask that you report to the Quarantine Corps without fail.

That clear, bright voice.

That flowing hair.

That graceful, elegant bearing.

And those unshakeable, untarnished principles of hers.

They're respectable, but at the same time sickening.

Captain Fione:

We're withdrawing.

「馬鹿なことをする」

呟いた女隊長が細剣を鞘に戻した。

かなりの剣の腕だ。

特に、抜き打ちの速さは疾風と言っている。

「牢獄の皆さん、ご協力感謝する」

隊長が野次馬に告げる。

「お陰で羽化病罹患者を無事保護することができた」

「彼女たちは、残酷な労働から解放され、治療に専念することができる」

「今後も、罹患者を見かけたら、必ず防疫局まで知らせて欲しい」

その、朗々とした声。

流れるような髪。

端整な立ち居振る舞い。

そして、穢れのない主義主張。

立派だが、気色が悪い。

「撤収する」

Captain Fione:

Let's not have any incidents. Treat the sufferers with respect.

Vice-Captain Lang:

Understood.

Surrounding the Winged women and the brothel owner, the Wing Hunters form up.

Then, turning toward their new staging area, they start walking.

One-Armed Girl:

Ahhh...

Vice-Captain Lang:

Hey, you!

The one-armed Winged girl breaks away from the line and runs toward us.

What the hell?

One-Armed Girl:

I found you...

She says, grabbing the brothel owner's severed arm.

One-Armed Girl:

Handy-hand... handy-hand!

One-Armed Girl:

I found it... my handy-hand!

The girl presses the bloody end of the man's arm up against her own scarred stump.

One-Armed Girl:

Oh... it won't stay on. Why? Why? Why not?

「粗相のないよう、罹患者は丁重に扱え」

「了解です」

羽つきと娼館主を囲んで、羽狩りが隊列を組む。

そして、詰め所に向かってゆっくりと歩き始めた。

「あ~~~~~」

「あっ、お前」

隻腕の羽つきが、列を離れ、俺達の方に走ってきた。

一体なんだ？

「みつけたあ〜」

と、少女が掴んだのは、斬り飛ばされた娼館主の腕だった。

「お手々え.....お手てえ〜」

「わたしの、お手々え見つけたあ〜」

少女は、男の腕を自分の胴体に押し付ける。

「あれえ、くっつかないよお〜、あれえ、あれえ、あれえ」

One-Armed Girl:

Big sister, put it on for me...

Tia:

Hya! Aah...

Tia can't even answer her.

All she can do is shake her head, tears pouring down her cheeks.

Kaim:

You can put it on nice and tight at home.

Kaim:

If you put it on in a hurry, it'll fall off again.

One-Armed Girl:

Okaaay.

She replies brightly, then heads back to the line.

Tia:

Ah...

Kaim:

Get a hold of yourself.

I pat Tia's head, but she doesn't answer me.

All I can hear is her shaking breath and quiet whimpers.

The line of Wing Hunters disappears into the distance, and the onlookers disperse too.

All that's left in the alleyway is a puddle of blood and an air of desolation.

And us.

Tia:

「おねえちゃん、つけてえ〜」

「ひ、あ.....あ、あ.....」

ティアはもう返事もできない。

涙を流し、首を振るだけだ。

「腕は家でゆっくりつけろ」

「慌ててつけると、曲がるぞ」

「はあい」

元気に返事をして、隻腕の羽つきは列へ戻っていった。

「ひっ、うっ、うっ.....」

「しっかりしろ」

ティアの頭を撫でるが、反応は返ってこない。

ただ声を震わせている。

羽狩りの列は遠ざかり、野次馬も散っていく。

路地に残ったのは、一つの血痕と寂寞とした空気。

そして俺達だ。

「誰も、助けないんですね」

Nobody's going to save them, are they?

Kaim:

「羽つきは保護されたんだ」

The Winged have been taken in.

Tia:

「でも、ボロボロでした」

But they were so badly beaten...

Tia says, her voice thick with tears.

ティアが鼻声で言う。



Kaim:

「今回は最悪に近い例だ」

This was close to the worst I've ever seen.

Kaim:

「争いもなく、嬉しそうにつれて
いかれる羽つきもいる」

There are Winged who go along without a
fight, even looking happy about it.

Tia:

「だからって.....」

But why...

Tia:

「みんな止めてあげればいいの
に」

Everyone could have stopped them...

<p>Kaim:</p> <p>Then why didn't you step up and do something yourself?</p>	<p>「なら、お前が率先して助ければいい」</p>
<p>Kaim:</p> <p>Or are you saying you'd make other people do something you won't?</p> <p>Tia looks despondent.</p>	<p>「自分はやらなかったことを他人にやらせるのか？」</p> <p>ティアがしゅんとする。</p>
<p>Kaim:</p> <p>Just being close to a Winged is enough to spread the Feathering Sickness.</p>	<p>「羽つきが近くにいれば羽化病が伝染る」</p>
<p>Kaim:</p> <p>Say you did save a Winged...</p>	<p>「例えば、お前が羽つきを助けたとしてだ.....」</p>
<p>Kaim:</p> <p>If because of that, a friend of yours got sick, would you be able to forgive yourself?</p>	<p>「そのせいで友人が病にかかったら、お前は自分を許せるか？」</p>
<p>Tia:</p> <p>T-that's...</p>	<p>「そ、それは.....」</p>
<p>Kaim:</p> <p>The Wing Hunters' way of doing things might be violent, but there's a reason no one criticizes them.</p> <p>Why am I taking the Wing Hunters' side here?</p> <p>It feels like the viewpoint I expressed back in Violeeta has been switched with the Captain's, and it makes me feel sick.</p>	<p>「羽狩りのやり方は乱暴だが、だからといって奴らを責める奴なんかいない」</p> <p>なぜ、俺が羽狩りの理を説いているのか。</p> <p>ヴィノレタでの、俺と女隊長の立場が逆転したようで、居心地が悪い。</p>
<p>Kaim:</p> <p>It's best to leave the Winged to the Wing Hunters.</p>	<p>「羽つきは羽狩りに任せるのが一番だ」</p>
<p>Kaim:</p> <p>...well, you're different, though.</p>	<p>「.....お前は別だがな」</p>

Tia:

Thank you...

Tia somehow manages a smile.

Kaim:

Let's go home.

Kaim:

Think you can eat anything?

Tia:

...I'll try my best.

Tia:

If I don't eat, I'll be punished, after all.

What?

Tia's bearing seems slightly different from usual.

She doesn't feel like some kind of small animal, surreptitiously sizing me up.

I wonder if she's had some kind of change in her mental state.

Tia:

Is something wrong?

Kaim:

No, don't worry about it.

Tia:

You're acting strange, Mr. Kaim.

Kaim:

...

Tia grabs on tightly to the cuff of my sleeve.

「ありがとうございます」

ティアがなんとか笑みを浮かべた。

「帰るぞ」

「飯は食べそうか？」

「.....頑張って食べます」

「食べないなんて罰が当たりますから」

なんだ？

ティアの纏う雰囲気は今までとは違っている。

いつもの、こちらを窺うような、小動物じみた気配がない。

何か心境の変化でもあったのだろうか。

「どうかしましたか？」

「いや、気にするな」

「変なカイクさんです」

「.....」

ティアが、俺の服の裾をぎゅっと握る。

Something is definitely up.

But still, I can't tell exactly what.

やはり何かがあるらしい。

だが、正体はわからない。

APPENDIX 10

TIA'S ESCAPE (Act 3, p. 117 – 127)

After the horrendous brothel raid, Tia and Kaim return home, very subdued. Tia makes Kaim some tea, and as he drinks she tells him that she has remembered the night of the murders, but can recall no details aside from that the murderer was a man and wore large boots. Kaim is disappointed, but continues to press.



Almost no new information.

新情報がほとんどない。

To think my expectations were this far off-base...

ここまで期待はずれとは。

Kaim:

「光.....そう、光はどうだ？」

The light... right, what about the light?

Kaim:

「《終わりの夕焼け》と同じ色の光を見ただろう」

You saw it, right? The light the same color as the Tragedia.

Tia:

「.....すみません」

...I'm sorry.

Kaim:

「隠してないだろうな」

You're not hiding anything from me, are you?

Tia:

I really didn't see anything, other than what I just told you.

Tia looks down.

It doesn't seem like she's lying.

Truth be told, watching people be ripped apart one after the other like that would be too much for a regular person.

Even if she did cover her eyes, I don't feel like criticizing her for it.

And it's hard to think that she might be covering for the culprit.

Kaim:

You can't help not seeing it.

Tia:

I'm sorry I can't be of any use...

Kaim:

No need to apologize.

Tia:

Okay...

The conversation trails off.

But I can feel Tia's eyes on me, like she wants to say something.

Kaim:

What is it?

Tia:

Um... the truth is... there's one more thing I need to apologize for.

「本当に見てないんです、今お話ししたこと以外」

ティアが俯いた。

嘘をついているわけではなさそう
だ。

実際、次々と人が殺されていく状況を直視し続けることなど、普通の人間には無理だ。

目を塞いでいたとしても責める気にはならない。

ティアが犯人をかばっているという線も考えにくいだろう。

「見てないものは仕方ない」

「ごめんなさい、役に立てなくて」

「謝る必要はない」

「はい.....」

会話が途切れた。

だが、何か言いたげなティアの視線を感じる。

「どうした？」

「あの、実は.....もう一つ謝らなくてはいけないことが」

Kaim:

「言ってみろ」

Go ahead, then.

Tia knits her eyebrows together, looking like she's in pain.

ティアが苦しそうに眉を歪ませる。

Tia:

「わたし.....あの.....ええと.....」

I... well... um...

Tia:

「あの夜のこと、初めから忘れてなんかいなかったんです」

About that night... the truth is, I remembered right from the start.

Seems my intuition was spot-on about that, at least.

俺の直感は当たっていたようだ。

But I'm hardly going to tell her that.

だが口にするまでもあるまい。

I let out a big sigh, and decide to keep up the pretense that I was fooled.

一つ大きくため息をついて、騙されていた素振りをしておく。

Kaim:

「なんで忘れたふりなんかしたんだ」

Why did you pretend you'd forgotten?

Tia:

「すべて話したら、追い出されて分かってましたから」

Because I knew that once I told you everything, you'd kick me out.

Tia:

「わたしなんかを家に置く意味、それ以外にありませんし」

I know that's the only reason there could be to let someone like me stay in your home.

Kaim:

「なるほど。だから言い出せなかったのか」

I see. So that's why you didn't say anything?

Tia:

「はい、お手間を取らせてすみませんでした」

Yes... I'm sorry for wasting your time.

Kaim:

「いや、当然の判断だ」

No, it's a natural decision to make.

Kaim:

「なかなかよく考えたじゃないか」

Seems like you thought it through pretty well.

Tia:

「嘘についてごめんなさい」

I'm sorry for lying to you.

Kaim:

「別に構わない」

I don't really mind.

It's not my place to blame her for it.

俺がこいつを責められるわけがない。

In order to loosen her lips, I've been pretending to be nice to her all this time, after all.

口を割らせるために、散々優しいふりをしてきたのだ。

Kaim:

「むしろ、お前の方が正常だ」

Actually, I'd argue that that's more normal.

Tia:

「嘘をつくのが、ですか？」

Lying is...?

Kaim:

「ああ。生きるために嘘について何が悪い」

Yeah. What's wrong with telling lies to stay alive?

Tia:

「わたしには、よくわかりません」

I don't really understand that.

Kaim:

「正直なんだな、お前は」

You're an honest one, after all.

Tia:

「褒めてくれるんですか」

Are you praising me?

Kaim:

「まあな」

Well, you know.

If I had to pick one or the other, it was sarcasm.

どちらかといえば皮肉だ。

Tia's honesty is a rare thing in the Prison, but it won't get her anywhere at all.

牢獄で、ティアの正直さは貴重だが何の得にもならない。

If anything, it'll shorten her lifespan.

むしろ寿命を縮めることになるだろう。

Tia:

「よかったです」

I'm glad.



Tia:

「最後に褒めてもらえました」

To be praised by you, in the end.

The end, huh.

最後か。

Since we've come this far, I'll be kind to her until the second I hand her over to Sieg.

せっかくだ、ジークに引き渡すその瞬間までは優しくしておこう。

Kaim:

「別に最後じゃない」

It's not really the end.

Kaim:

「これからのことは、明日ジークと相談しよう」

We'll talk to Sieg tomorrow about what to do now.

Tia:

「もういいんです、カイクさん」

That's enough, Mr. Kaim.

She says it calmly.

冷然とした口調だった。

Kaim:

「何？」

Hm?

Tia:

「わたしは全部話しました」

I told you everything.

Tia:

「これ以上、優しくする価値なんてないです」

There's no value in being nice to me anymore.

Kaim:

「おい」

Hey.

Tia:

「わかってます」

I understand.

Tia:

「わたしが事件のことを話しやすいように、優しくしてくれたんですよ」

You were being nice to me to get me to talk about the incident, right?

Kaim:

「それはお前の妄想だ」

You're imagining things.

Tia shakes her head fiercely.

ティアが激しく首を振る。

Tia:

「わたし聞いてしまったんです」

I overheard you.

Tia:

「カイクさんの家に来た最初の日、みなさんが今後のことを相談しているのを」

The first night I stayed at your house, I overheard everyone talking about what to do when this time came.

Tia:

「だから、自分があの夜のことを話したらどうなるかも、大体分かっていました」

So I more or less understood what was going to happen to me after I told you what happened that night.

Kaim:

「そうか……」

I see...

Having been found out from the very beginning... it's shameful.

Basically, we both knew the other was lying the whole time.

What a farce these few days with Tia have been.

Kaim:

Hypothetically... assuming your guess is right...

Kaim:

If you knew that it was the end for you once you talked, why would you spill the secret?

Tia:

Because...

Tia bites her lip.

Tia:

I didn't want to be a bother to you, Mr. Kaim.

Kaim:

To me?

Tia:

If you shelter a Winged in your home, someday it'll end up like what we saw today.

Tia:

I'm not someone worth protecting.

Tia:

I'm not even worth feeding the scraps you'd give a dog or cat.

Tia:

So, I thought I would let you know that I knew, and have it over with.

初めからばれていたとは、みっともない限りだ。

つまり、俺達は互いの嘘を知っていたということか。

本当に茶番だったんだな、ティアとの数日は。

「仮にお前の想像の通りだったとしてだ.....」

「喋ったら終わりだと分かっている、どうして打ち明けた？」

「それは.....」

ティアが唇を噛んだ。

「カイクさんの、ご迷惑になりにくくなかったんです」

「俺の？」

「羽つきが家にいたら、いつか今日みたいなことになります」

「わたしは守ってもらうほど価値のある人間じゃありません」

「犬猫と同じ食事もらえなかった女です」

「だからもう、知っていることはお伝えして、終わりにしようと思ったんです」

Tia speaks falteringly.

訥々と語るティア。

For some reason, I get irritated.

なぜか苛立ちが募る。

Kaim:

What is it with this nonsensical self-sacrificing streak of yours? Are you aiming to become a nun or something?

「なんだ、その意味不明な自己犠牲は？聖職者にでもなったつもりか？」

Tia:

「わかりません」

I don't know.

Tia:

「わたし馬鹿だから、難しいことはわかりません」

I'm stupid, so I don't understand complicated things like that.

Tia:

「でも、カイクさん言ったじゃないですか」

But you said it yourself, Mr. Kaim.

Tia:

「自分のせいで人が羽つきになっちゃったら、自分を許せるかって」

If someone became Winged because of you, could you forgive yourself?

Tia:

「わたし、許せません」

I couldn't.

Kaim:

「それは大切な人間の話だ。俺達はお前を騙してたんだぞ」

I'm talking about people important to you. We all lied to you!

Tia:

「それでも、親切にしてくれました」

Even so, you were kind to me.

Kaim:

「だからそれは……」

Like I said, that...

Tia:

「もういいですっ」

That's enough already!

Tia cuts me off.

ティアが言い切った。



Tia:

「やめてください……もう……」

Please... just stop already...

Is she angry we lied to her?

騙されたことを怒っているのか。

No, she knew what we were doing since the start.

いや、俺が騙しにかかるのは初めから知っていたはずだ。

Is she angry at me, for keeping up the charade even after everything was revealed?

ばれていることにも気づかず、臆面もなく演技し続けた俺に怒っているのか？

Would she worry about being a bother to a man like that?

なら、そんな男に迷惑をかけたくないなど考えるだろうか？

Not likely. In fact, all the more reason not to feel guilty about it.

むしろ利用するのに気が咎めなくていいではないか。

Don't tell me she's actually fallen for me?

まさか、本気で俺に惚れて？

Not possible.

ありえない。

Even though she knew from the start I was lying to her.

騙してくるのが初めから分かっているのに。

I have no idea what she's thinking—

ティアの考えていることがわからない——

The heart I thought I could read so easily is covered over with black mist.

Yeah, I know this feeling.

The feeling when you part with a woman you've grown familiar with.

Someone you thought you'd always understand changes suddenly and completely into an entirely different person, in one single stark instant.

It's a kind of piling up of emotions that only happens inside women's hearts.

That's a fort that no man will ever capture.

I didn't expect Tia to be feminine in this particular way.

Tia:

I've told you everything I can.

Tia:

So I can't be of any more use to you... I'm like a kept bird that won't sing anymore.

Tia:

Let's just have it over with.

Kaim:

And what will you do once it's over with? Go turn yourself in to the Hunters?

Tia:

I'm afraid of the Wing Hunters, so I'll go somewhere else.

Kaim:

I'm asking you where you think that is.

今まで、明瞭に見えていた心の裡が、黒い靄に覆われている。

ああ、この感じは知っている。

馴染んでいた女と別れる時の、あの感じ。

ずっと通じ合っていると考えていた人間が、突然理解不能の別人へと変わる、一瞬の鮮烈な切り替わり。

女の中だけで完結した感情の積み重ね。

それは、男には攻略できない堅牢な砦だ。

こんなところで、ティアに女を感じるとは思ってもよらなかった。

「話せることは全部話しました」

「だからもう、わたしは役に立たない.....唄えなくなった小鳥と同じです」

「終わりにしましょう」

「終わりにしてどうする？羽狩りの詰め所にでも行くのか？」

「羽狩りさんは怖いので、どこか違うところに行きます」

「だからどこに行くんだ？」

Kaim:

Someone like you wandering around this place? You'll be nothing but an easy target for the backalley thugs.

Tia:

I'm used to having bad things happen to me, so.

Kaim:

Are you an idiot?!

Tia:

I am an idiot.

Tia:

I've told you plenty of times that I am, haven't I...

Tia's voice thickens.

Her hands in her lap clench and unclench the hem of her skirt, almost matching the rhythm of her breath.

I can't say the words I should.

Tia:

...I'm an idiot.

「お前みたいな奴がフラフラしてたら、チンピラのいいカモだぞ」

「辛い目に遭うのは慣れてますから」

「馬鹿かお前は」

「馬鹿です」

「何度も、馬鹿だって言ってるじゃないですか.....」

ティアが鼻声になった。

膝に置いた手が、息をするようにスカートの裾を握ったり離したりしている。

言うべき言葉が出てこなかった。

「馬鹿なんです」



Tia:

So please, don't bother yourself any further with a woman like me...

Tia stands up.

Kaim:

Hey... ugh!

I try to stand up, and instead, my knees hit the floor.

My body feels heavy.

What is this?

What's going on?

Kaim:

...

Tia:

I'm sorry.

A medicine sachet falls from Tia's closed hand.

「だからもう、わたしみたいな女は構わないでください」

ティアが立ち上がる。

「おいっ」

追いすがろうとして、俺は床に膝をついた。

身体が重い。

どうした？

何が起こってる？

「.....」

「すみません」

ティアの手から、薬包紙が落ちる。



Kaim:

「……お前……」

You...

Tia:

「昼間に、エリスさんの薬箱から
こっそり盗っておいたんです」

This afternoon, I snuck it from Ms. Eris's
medicine chest.

Tia:

「分量が分からなかったので、全
部入れてしまいました」

I didn't know how much to put in, so... I put
in it all.

Tia:

「でも、眠り薬って書いてありま
すから、きっと大丈夫ですよ」

But, it said 'sleeping medicine' on the bag, so
it'll be alright, right?

If she got the dosage wrong, I'm dead.

量を間違えれば死ぬ。

This girl is truly an idiot.

とことん馬鹿だこいつは。

I don't know what she plans to do on her own.

一人じゃ、何をやらすかわから
ん。

Kaim:

「馬鹿……が……」

You... idiot...

Tia smiles faintly.

ティアが儂げに笑う。

Tia:

I've been wanting to say it this whole time, but you shouldn't call people 'idiot' or 'moron'.

「ずっと言おうと思ってたんですけど、人のこと馬鹿とかあほとか言っちゃ駄目です」

Tia:

I really am an idiot, so it's okay with me, but other people aren't, so...

「わたしは本当に馬鹿だからいいけど、他の人はそうじゃないので」

Kaim:

Sh... shut up.

「う.....うるさい」

A tingling haze is starting to spread through my whole body.

しびれが、身体に拡がっていく。

Tia:

Mr. Kaim, thank you for taking care of me.

「カイクさん、お世話になりました」

Kaim:

Ti...a...

「.....ティ、ア.....」

Tia:

Farewell...

「さようなら」

Tia:

Even if we were lying, it felt kind of like we were lovers, and I was very happy...

「嘘でも恋人みたいなことができて、すごく嬉しかったです」

APPENDIX 11

KAIM LEAVES (Act 4, p. 22 – 30)

Tia, having drugged Kaim, has left his house, but unexpectedly, she runs into Captain Fione of the Wing Hunters, who recognizes her but does not see her wings; Fione attempts to bring her home, but Tia, alone and terrified, flees into the rat's nest of alleyways that make up the central Prison as the rain begins to fall. Meanwhile, Eris brings Kaim back to consciousness and informs him that Tia has run off. As Tia is captured by the Wing Hunters, Kaim, unable to sit still, heads out into the storm to find her.



Eris:

「降ってきた」

Here it comes.

Eris, standing by the window, whispers to herself.

窓辺に立つ、エリスが呟いた。

Eris:

「雨の牢獄って、泥を溜めた桶みたい」

When it rains, the Prison turns into a giant bucket full of mud.

I take a look outside.

窓の外を見た。

The rain is so heavy, you almost can't see the lights from the other houses.	雨にけむり、家々の明かりはほとんど見えない。
The darkness continues on endlessly.	闇が果てしなく広がっている。
In this rain, clothes will stick and wings will be easier to see.	この雨では、服が透け羽は見えやすくなるだろう。
If she can't find a roof to stay under, the rain will steal away her strength, too.	屋根を確保できなければ、体力も奪われていく。
What an unfortunate woman.	本当に不幸な女だ。
Not even an instant of respite for her.	欠片ほどの救いもない。
Eris:	「助けに行ったら？」
Why don't you go look for her?	
Eris:	「今頃、寒くて震えてるかも」
She's probably shivering with cold right now.	
Eris's words make my irritation swell.	エリスの言葉に焦燥感が膨らむ。
It's not out of concern for Tia's bodily condition.	だがそれは、ティアの身体を気遣ってのことではない。
Rather, if she dies, I'll never get this bone that's stuck in my throat out.	彼女が死ねば、喉に刺さった骨が一生抜けないのでは、というぼんやりとした懸念があるからだ。
Still, it would be equivalent to sticking my neck out for the Wing Hunters to step on.	だが、羽つきを傍に置くなんて面倒を自分から背負い込むようなもの。
Really, there's very little reason to save Tia.	敢えてティアを助ける理由としては、あまりに小さい。
It's her own damn foolishness that brought her to this, anyway.	第一、大人気ない。
Kaim:	「あいつは、もう関係のない女だ」
I don't have anything to do with her anymore.	
Eris:	「じゃあ、これもいらないか」
Then you won't be needing this, will you?	

Eris shows me a piece of paper in her hand.

エリスが手にした紙を見せる。

Kaim:

「なんだ？」

What is that?

Eris:

「関係ない女からの手紙」

A letter from a woman you have nothing to do with anymore.

Eris:

「捨てる？」

Shall I throw it away?

Saying nothing, I walk over to Eris and take the letter.

何も言わずエリスに近づき、手紙を取る。

Seeing my expression, Eris raises an eyebrow.

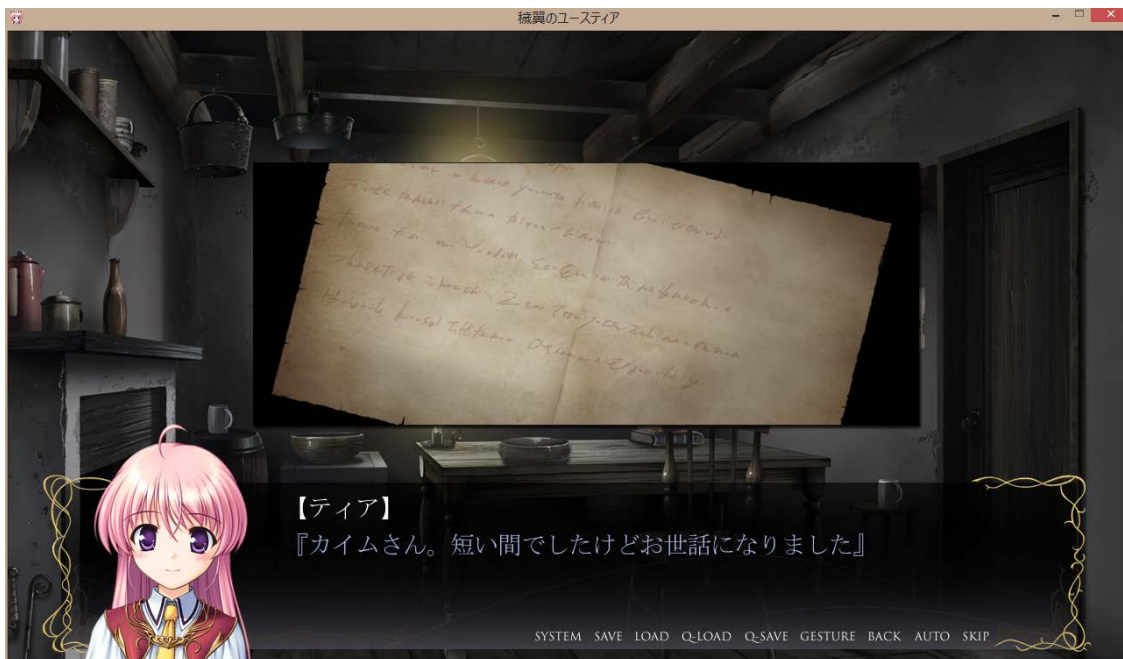
俺の顔を見て、エリスはすかした表情で眉を上げた。

There are two folded pieces of paper inside.

二つ折り畳まれた紙を開く。

The handwriting is absolute shit.

下手糞な字だった。



Tia:

『カイクさん。短い間でしたけどお世話になりました』

Mr. Kaim, though it was only for a short time, thank you for looking after me.

Tia:	『とても楽しかったです』
It was very much fun.	
Tia:	『わたしのことは心配しないでください』
Please don't worry about me.	
Tia:	『時々見る夢の中で、いつも誰かに言われるんです』
In a certain dream I have sometimes, someone always tells me:	
Tia:	『お前には、生まれてきた意味がある』
'There is a reason you were born.'	
Tia:	『いずれ大切な使命を果たす運命にあるんだって』
'Someday, you are fated to fulfill a great mission,' they say.	
Tia:	『だから、どんなに辛いことがあっても頑張って生きていきます』
That's why, no matter how hard it might be, I'll push on and keep living.	
Tia:	『カイクさんもお体に気をつけて頑張ってください』
Please take care of yourself and do your best to live on, too, Mr. Kaim.	
Tia:	『あと、エリスさんとは仲良くしてください』
Oh, and please try to get along with Ms. Eris.	
That's all.	くしゃ
I crumple the letter in my fist.	紙を握りつぶした。
Eris:	「読ませて」
Let me read it.	
Kaim:	「……」
...	
I hand the letter to Eris without a word.	無言で手紙をエリスに渡す。
She skims over it quickly, then looks back to me.	ざっと目を通し、俺に返してきた。

I don't get the feeling she bothered reading it.	受け取る気になれない。
Eris lets out a sigh, then starts trying to uncrumple the paper.	エリスは一つため息をついて、紙のしわを伸ばす。
She puts the two sheets back on the table.	それを二つに畳んでテーブルに置いた。
Eris:	「とりあえず仲良くする？」
Well then, shall we get along?	
Kaim:	「また今度な」
Some other time, okay?	
Eris:	「手紙の何が気に食わないの？」
Something in there bothering you?	
Eris:	「内容が夢見がちっていうのはわかるけど」
Even though the contents sound like a fantasy.	
Kaim:	「わかってるじゃないか」
Perceptive, aren't you?	
Eris:	「カリカリするほどのこと？」
Enough to make you this touchy?	
Kaim:	「別にカリカリしちゃいない」
I'm not being touchy.	
I pour some wine into my glass and slug it in one go.	ワインをグラスに注ぎ、一息で飲み干す。
Kaim:	「運命か……」
Fated, huh...	
If such a thing exists, then—	もし、人にそんなものがあるのなら—



All those people who were dragged down to hell that day, what of them?

Were they born just to die like that?

As if to shake away the vision, I take another gulp of wine.

Fate is nothing but a human invention.

When terrible things happen, people cling to the idea just to help them get by.

I don't think it's a bad thing. Rather, I think that in this world, it's all but necessary to survive.

Tia acting like she's been directly told that fate is a real thing strangely irritates me.

Eris:

She has to believe in fate or something, or she would never have made it this far, you know.

あの日、下界へと吸いこまれていった奴らは、なんだったんだ？

死ぬために生まれてきたというのか？

幻を振り払うように、俺はまたワインを呷る。

運命なんてものは、所詮、人の心が作り出した幻影。

嫌な経験をした時、運命だっと思って諦めるのはよくある話だ。

それが悪いことだとは思わないし、こんな世界で生きていくには、むしろ必要なことだとも思う。

それを実在するかのように語るティアが、妙に腹立たしい。

「これは運命だとでも思わなきゃ、やってこれなかったってことでしょ」

Kaim:

「それはわかってる」

I know that.

Kaim:

「だが、ティアは未来の不幸から
目を逸らしてるだけだ」

But Tia's just refusing to see the misfortune
waiting for her in the future.

Kaim:

「その頭の悪さが気に入らない」

I hate that idiocy of hers.

Eris:

「面倒な怒り方」

You get mad over the strangest things.

She sighs.

ため息をつかれた。



Eris:

「ま、夢見がちっていっても、こ
の子は行き過ぎてる」

Well, even for a fantasy, this girl's going too
far with it.

Eris:

「夢の中で、自分のことを他者に
語らせるくらいだし」

Pretending she's someone important because
of a dream she had.

Kaim:

「便利な夢だ」

What convenient dreams.

Kaim:

She even claimed she saw the Gran Forte in one.

Eris:

That's too much.

A flicker of doubt crosses my mind.

Why did I pick up Tia in the first place?

To find out what that light she was radiating was all about.

A human being shining with light is already crazy talk by itself.

Is it really reasonable to just discard Tia's dream of the Gran Forte, then?

The light shining from her body was the same color as the Tragedia that appeared right before the Gran Forte.

Kaim:

...

I stand up.

The interaction of the medicine and the alcohol makes my footsteps unsteady.

Eris:

That's why I told you to stop drinking.

Kaim:

Bring me my coat.

Kaim:

There's something I want to ask her.

「見たこともない、《大崩落》のことも教えてくれるらしい」

「無茶苦茶ね」

ふと、頭を疑問がかすめる。

俺は、なんのためにティアを拾ったんだ？

奴が放った光の正体を確かめるためだ。

そもそも、人間が光ということ自体が無茶苦茶な話。

なら、ティアが見る《大崩落》の夢を、無茶苦茶だと否定していいのか。

奴が放った光の色は、《大崩落》の直前に現れた《終わりの夕焼け》と同じ色なのだ。

「.....」

立ち上がる。

酒と薬の相乗効果か足元がふらつく。

「だからお酒は止めたのに」

「外套を取ってくれ」

「あいつに聞きたいことができた」

Eris's eyes go wide, and she looks shocked.

エリスの目が一瞬点になり、すぐに呆れの色が浮かんた。

Eris:

After all that time saying you wouldn't go help her, now you feel sorry for her?

「さんざん助けに行かないって言ってて、今ごろ可哀想になった」

Eris:

You could have been honest from the start...

「最初から素直に……」

Kaim:

That's not it.

「違う」

Kaim:

Think back.

「思い出してくれ」

Kaim:

When I picked her up, I told you I'd seen a light, right?

「俺があいつを拾った時、光を見たと言っただろう？」

Eris:

You said it was the same color as the Tragedia.

「《終わりの夕焼け》と同じ色の光とかいう」

Kaim:

Humans aren't supposed to glow, but Tia was.

「人間は普通光らないが、ティアは光を放った」

Kaim:

That glowing woman has dreams of the Gran Forte.

「その女が《大崩落》を夢に見ている」

Eris:

So you think she knows something about it?

「だからあの子が《大崩落》の何かを知っている？」

Kaim:

Yeah.

「ああ」

Eris:

I see.

「なーるほど」

Eris has clearly already lost interest.

エリスの顔からは、すでに興味が失われていた。

Eris:

「つまり、助けに行きたいんだ」

So basically, you want to go save her.

Kaim:

「違うと言ってる」

That's not what I said.

Eris:

「おかしい。冷静じゃない」

You're acting strangely. This isn't your usual level-headedness.

Eris:

「常識的に考えて人間は光らない」

It's common sense – people don't glow.

Eris:

「なら、カイクが見た光が錯覚だったと判断するのが妥当」

Therefore, the light you saw was an illusion or a hallucination, nothing more.

Eris:

「結論ありきで理屈を曲げてる」

You're only seeing what you want to be true.

Kaim:

「俺は見たんだ。自分を疑ってどうする」

I saw it myself! Why would I doubt my own eyes?



Eris:

I hear the same from every drug-addled girl in the district, you know.

I ignore Eris and grab my coat from the wall.

Eris:

I'm opposing this, for the record.

Eris:

You shouldn't go near the Winged without a good reason.

Eris:

I don't see why this means so much to you.

Kaim:

I won't cause any trouble for you all.

Eris:

I'm not talking about trouble for us, I'm talking about trouble for you!

Kaim:

「麻薬中毒の子もよく同じこと言うけど」

エリスを無視して、俺は壁の外套を掴む。

「私、反対」

「理由もなく羽つきを近くに置かないで」

「カイクに何があるかわからない」

「周りに迷惑はかけない」

「周りの話なんかしてない、カイク本人のこと」

「なら、俺が決めることだ」

Then it's my business to decide!

I dig my heels in.

Eris has a point, but I don't want to give ground.

If I agree that the light was a hallucination and doubt what I saw, what then?

I saw what I saw.

That's all there is to it.

Twisting things you saw to fit your expectations.

Pretending you didn't see anything you didn't want to.

It was nothing as base as that.

I've spent my life crawling around in the mud of the Prison.

It's nothing to boast about, but at the very least it should be proof that I'm a practical person.

Kaim:

Sorry.

I put on my overcoat.

It's a real downpour outside.

Eris:

I pray you don't find her.

Kaim:

I'm not coming back until I do.

With my coat on, I melt into the rain-soaked darkness.

強弁する。

理はエリスにあるが、引く気はない。

あの光が錯覚だと自分を疑ってどうする。

見たものは見たし、見ていないものは見ていない。

それだけのことだ。

見たものを願望で歪曲して認識する。

見たくないものは見なかったことにする。

そんな低水準ではないはずだ。

俺は、幼いころから牢獄の泥の中を這いずり回ってきたのだ。

誇れるほどの勲章ではないが、少なくとも実際家であることの証明にはなるはずだ。

「悪いな」

外套を羽織る。

ドアの外は本降りだった。

「見つからないことを祈ってる」

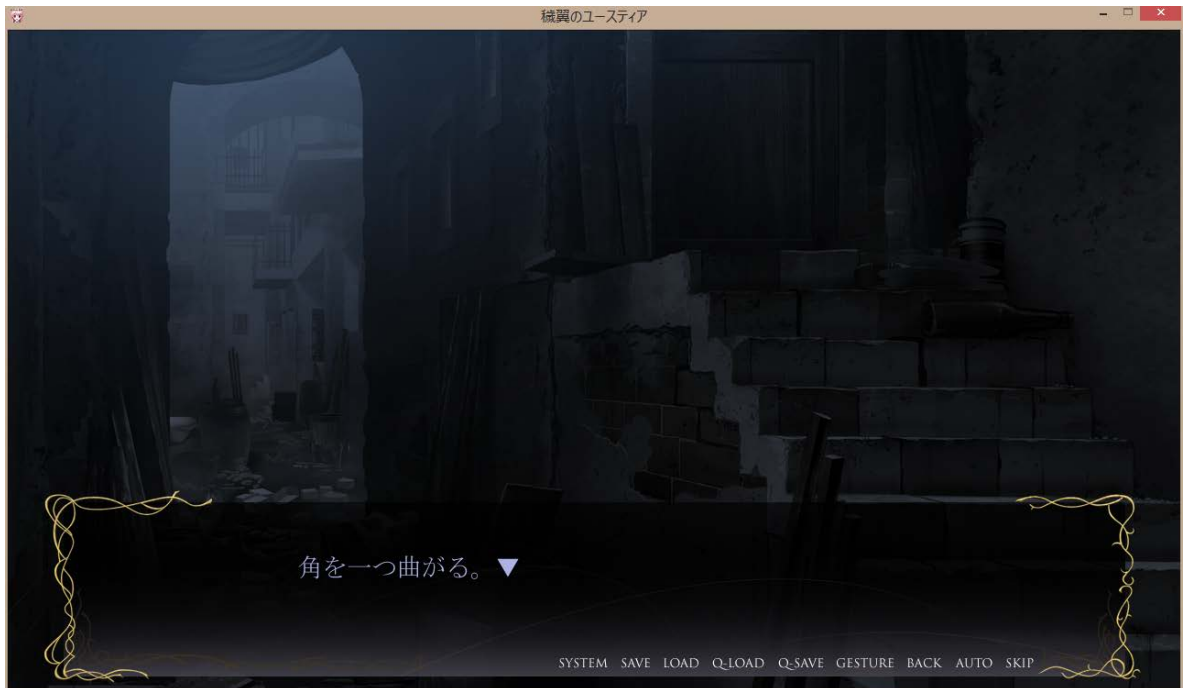
「見つけるまでは帰ってこない」

外套を羽織り、俺は雨の闇に溶け込んだ。

APPENDIX 12

RESURRECTION (Act 4, p. 42 – 49)

After being attacked by a vagrant, Tia is rescued, then taken into custody by the Wing Hunters. Kaim, masked and hot on their trail, is significantly delayed trading blows with Captain Fione, who sends her subordinates on ahead to get Tia to the Wing Hunters' duty station. As Kaim gives Fione the slip, though, he realizes that someone else is tracking Tia as well – the shadowy, inhumanly strong figure that butchered the girls in the alleyway, and nearly killed him as it escaped.



I turn a corner.

In an instant, the thread of hope I'd been relying on snaps.

There's a Wing Hunter corpse at my feet.

It's that hook-nosed bastard.

Kaim:

Shit...!

Both of the Wing Hunters are dead.

角を一つ曲がる。

頼みの綱はあっという間に切れた。

足元に、羽狩りの死体が転がっていたのだ。

鷲鼻の奴だ。

「くそ……」

羽狩りは二人とも死んだ。

That leaves...

At the thought of losing her trail, my heart rate quickens.

The image of her torn to shreds in the gutter keeps coming back to me, no matter how many times I shake it away.

Tia... please be safe.

Stealthily, I move forward.

Even so, my own footsteps ring loud in my ears.

My entire body thrums with enough tension that I want to scream.

Kaim:

...!

In the darkness ahead, there's a person's shape.

A softly shaped body, curled up and leaning against a wall.

Her face is peaceful.

Her eyes, filled with warmth, look up at me.

残るは.....

迫り来る喪失の予感に、動悸が速くなる。

肉塊になり果てたティアが水溜まりから俺を見ている幻影が、何度打ち消しても現れる。

ティア.....無事でいてくれ。

忍び足で進む。

それでも、自分の足音が大きく聞こえた。

叫びだしたいほどの緊張が、全身を強張らせる。

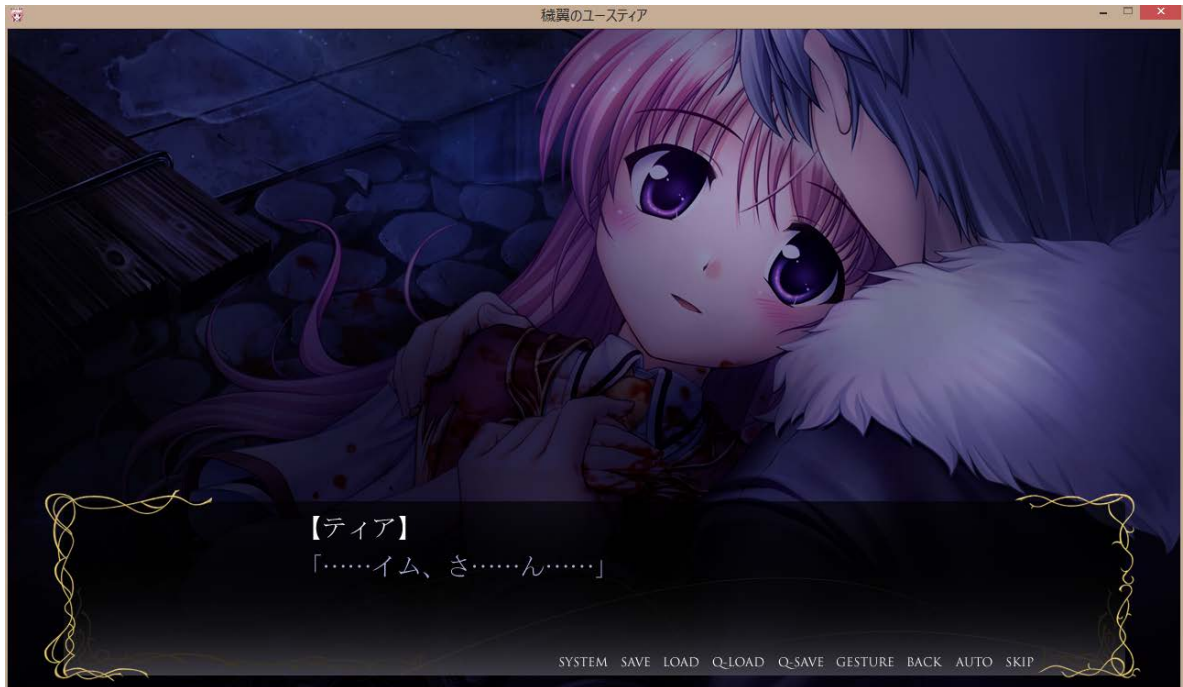
「.....」

暗がりに人影があった。

柔らかな曲線で構成された身体が、壁にもたれかかっている。

表情は穏やかだ。

温かな感情を湛えた目が、俺を見つめている。



Tia:	「……イム、さ……ん……」
Mr.... Kaim...	
Kaim:	「ティア」
Tia!	
Thank god.	よかった。
Relief fills me from the bottom of my heart.	胸の底から安堵が湧き上がる。
Just then,	その時、
A beam of moonlight spills through a gap in the clouds.	雲間から月光が差した。
There's a long, deep, rending wound in her side, from her shoulder to her hip.	肩から臍の脇に到る、長く深い引き裂き傷。
Fresh blood is flowing from the wound, and it glitters in the moonlight.	傷口からは鮮血が溢れ、月の光に輝いている。
In the colorless, grey night, it's a sight I could even call beautiful.	色のない夜の世界で、それは美しいとすら思える光景だった。
Kaim:	「ティアっ！」
Tia!	



I rush to her and cradle her in my arms.

No matter how many times I call her name, she doesn't respond.

Her pulse is already gone, and her body heat is quickly fading.

Shit...! Someone save her...!

Kaim:

Tia! Hey! Hey!

I need to stop the bleeding.

But this wound is huge.

Blood is all but gushing from it.

Kaim:

Tia... Tia... Tia!

I shake her body, and her head lolls bonelessly back and forth.

駆け寄り、身体を抱く。

何度も呼びかけるが、反応はない。

脈はすでになく、体温が急速に失われていくのがわかった。

くそっ、誰がこいつを！！

「ティアっ！おいっ、おいっ！」

止血したい。

だが、傷はあまりに大きい。

血液が次々とかぼれていく。

「ティアっ、ティアっ、ティアっ」

身体を揺ると、首が力なく揺れた。

Kaim:

Tia... hey... come on!

The flow of blood is weakening.

Probably, all that could have come out already has.

I understand.

What I'm holding to my chest...

Is Tia's corpse.

For a while, my mind goes blank.

The only thing audible through the haze in my head is the roar of my heartbeat in my ears.

The first feeling that comes over me isn't sadness, or even grief.

'I never thought she could die.'

It's surprise.

I only realized it after she was gone.

I never thought she could actually die.

No matter what cruelty she experienced, some part of me thought she'd just flounce her way through it.

That carelessness killed Tia, I'm sure.

As regret fills me, a nameless black feeling swells up inside me as well.

Serves you right.

There was no meaning to your life after all.

「ティア.....おい.....おい.....」

出血が弱くなった。

出るものはあらかた出てしまったのだろう。

わかっている。

俺の腕の中にあるのは、

ティアの死体だ。

しばらくの間、頭が働かない。

茫漠とした意識の上に自分の鼓動だけが響いていた。

初めにやってきた感情は、嘆きでも悲しみでもない。

『まさか、こいつが死ぬとは』

という意外さだった。

失って初めて気がつく。

俺は、こいつが本当に死ぬとは思っていなかった。

酷い目に遭っても、ヘラヘラと乗り切ってくれるとどこかで思っていたのだ。

その油断がティアを殺したのだろうか。

悔恨の情と同時に、何故か暗い感情がどこからともなくやってきた。

——ざまあない。

——生まれてきた意味など、なかったじゃないか。

It's a feeling I never knew I had, coming from who knows where.	自分のどこから来たのかもわからない、全くあずかり知らぬ感情だ。
Before I even have time to deny it, it disappears.	否定する間もなく、それは一瞬で消えた。
The girl called Tia really is a mystery.	ティアという女は本当に謎だ。
To bring up emotions I've never felt before...	今まで感じもしなかったことを、俺の心に浮かびあがらせる。
This girl might have been something important to me.	こいつは、もしかしたら俺にとって何か大切なものを持っていたのかもしれない。
Kaim:	「.....」
...	
I look at the corpse's face again.	改めて死に顔を見る。
She looks peaceful, and there's a faint smile on her lips.	穏やかで、口元には微笑さえ浮かんでいた。
In her last moments, she was smiling.	最期の瞬間、こいつは笑ったのだ。
If only I had come sooner—	もっと早く来てくれれば—
I wish she had scolded me for being late.	そう非難してくれたら、どれほど楽だったか。
Instead, Tia, slowly cooling, smiles a beatific, merciful smile.	だが、冷たくなっていくティアは、慈愛に溢れた聖女のような佇まいで微笑んでいる。
It wasn't my fault, she seems to be saying.	俺は悪くない、そう言ってくれているかのようだ。
That's what she's saying, without knowing just how much pain those words cause me.	その言葉が、俺をより苦しめるとも知らずに。
It would be so much easier if she reproached me.	責められた方が楽なこともある。

Thinking back, she never once had.

She just smiled like an idiot, never once seeing anything as mean-spirited.

You could call it stupidity if you wanted, or you could call it purity.

No matter which you went with, Tia had been an unusually good person.

When they're close to a strong sense of purity like that, it tends to make people realize the evil in their own hearts.

Comparing themselves to her, they feel their own shame and impurity more deeply than ever before.

In that sense, Tia was like a mirror, I guess.

A few hours ago, when Tia had vanished, I'd felt gloomy.

I'd looked in the mirror and found something dissatisfying about myself, hadn't I?

My corruption, my twistedness, all my lies...

Whatever it was, I'll never know.

Kaim:

Goddamnit...

I'm not sad.

I just feel a sense of loss, like I've let something important fall.

I wonder if I'll ever be able to pick it up again.

Impossible.

思えば、ティアはどんな時も相手を受け入れていた。

馬鹿みたいに笑って、どんな悪意も非難することなく。

愚鈍といえば愚鈍、純粋といえば純粋。

どちらにせよ、ティアは並外れて善良だった。

強い純粋さに接した時、多くの人は居心地の悪さを感じる。

相手と比較することで、自分の醜さや不純さがより鮮明になるからだ。

その意味で、ティアは鏡のような女だったのかもしれない。

数時間前、ティアがいなくなった時に俺が感じた鬱屈。

鏡を見て、俺は自分の何に腹を立てていたのか。

汚れか、歪みか、嘘か.....

その答えはもう得られない。

「畜生.....」

悲しくはない。

ただ、何かを取り落としたという喪失感があった。

俺は、それをまたいつか拾うことができるのか。

無理だろう。

The wound Tia left me with is small.

In a few days, it'll scab over, and a few more days after that it will be healed, without even a mark left to show where it once was.

Even while I remember the woman named Tia, the pain I feel right now will fade.

Whether that's strength or mere stubbornness I don't know, but right now, I feel slightly empty inside.

Kaim:

...

I touch her cheek, and dab away a drop of blood there.

Her temperature is dropping, and her skin is starting to tighten.

Nothing more than a corpse.

I touch a finger to her lips.

I stroke her nose, her brow, her cheek, and then her head.

She was truly an annoying girl.

My life had gotten so busy just having her around.

Even her stupid smile, in my memory, is nostalgic.

It's absurd.

Tia's life was just too cruel.

Now she'll never know what her purpose in life was, will she?

ティアが俺につけた傷は小さい。

数日でかさぶたができ、さらに数日後には跡形もなく消えてしまうだろう。

ティアという女の記憶は残っても、今感じている痛みは消えてしまうのだ。

それは強さやしたたかさと表現されるのかもしれないが、今は少し寂しかった。

「.....」

頬を撫で、付着した血液を拭う。

体温は下がり、肌の弾力は弱くなっていた。

完全な死体だ。

指で唇に触れる。

鼻、眉、額、そして頭を撫でる。

本当に五月蠅い女だった。

そこにいるだけで賑やかになった。

間が抜けてると思っていた笑顔も、今は懐かしい。

不条理なものだ。

ティアの人生はあまりに救いが無い。

これでは、何のために生まれてきたのかわからないじゃないか。

Kaim:

「ティア……」

Tia...

I order her bloodied, torn clothes.

ボロボロになってしまった服を整えてやる。

Doing so, I notice that she's tightly grasping something in her right hand.

ふと、ティアの右手が強く握られているのに気がついた。

I use a single finger to gently open her thin, doll-like fingers.

人形のように小さな手を両手で包み、優しく指を開かせる。

Kaim:

「……」

...

She had been clasping the necklace I bought for her.

握られていたのは、俺が買い与えた首飾りだった。

To think she'd treat a cheap trinket like that so dearly...

こんな安物を大事に抱えているとはな。

'It's not a cheap trinket.'

『安物じゃありません』

It's as if I could hear her saying that right then.

そんな声が聞こえるかのようだった。

I take the necklace from her hand.

ティアの手から首飾りを取る。

I fix the broken link with my teeth, and put it around her neck once again.

壊れた鎖を歯で噛んで補修し、もう一度首にかけてやる。

Kaim:

「なかなかいい女だ」

Now there's a fine woman.

If only she was still alive, I'd have bought her more.

生きてさえいれば、もっと買ってやれたのに。

If she was okay with things like that, I'd buy her mountains of them.

こんなもので良ければ、いくらでも。



As I narrow my eyes, Tia's body starts to glow.

Kaim:

?

Light...

...

...

Kaim:

It can't be...

This isn't a hallucination.

She really is glowing.

And that color...

Just before the Gran Forte,

Four days ago,

And just now.

眼を細めたその時、ティアの死体がぼんやりと光を帯びた。

「??」

光.....

.....。

.....。

「.....まさか」

目の錯覚ではない。

確かに光っている。

そして、この色。

《大崩落》の直前、

4日前、

そして今。

Twice before this light has thrown my life out of order, and here it is again.

Kaim:

Wha...

The wound that had split Tia's chest open begins to close.

Just as if time was flowing backwards.

Thump-thump.

俺の人生を狂わせた光が、三度、眼前に拡がっていく。

「な.....」

ティアの胸をえぐっていた傷が、塞がっていく。

まるで、時間が巻戻っているかのように。

ドクンッ



Beneath the stitched-together flesh, the sound of life begins to beat.

Tia's body feels warm.

Was she not dead?

No... she was definitely dead.

Assuming I'm not dreaming, then...

抱きしめた肌の下で、命の音が刻まれる。

ティアの身体に熱を感じた。

死んでいなかったのか？

違う、確かにこいつは死んでいた。

俺が夢を見ているのでなければ――

Then Tia...

Has just come back to life.

I can't see the wound on her chest anymore.

As if the fatal wound had been nothing but a joke, her body has returned to soft, feminine curves.

Kaim:

This... isn't possible...

There's no way.

There's no way this could be happening.

Who the hell is this girl?!

Before my shocked eyes,

Her lips, flushed again with pink, move ever so slightly.

Tia:

Mr. ... Kaim...

ティアは、

蘇生したのだ。

胸の傷はもう見当たらない。

致命傷を負ったことが冗談であったかのように、そこは女らしい曲線に戻っていた。

「馬鹿な.....こんなこと.....」

あり得ない。

あり得るわけがない。

こいつは一体、何者なんだ!?

驚愕にほぼ頭を乗っ取られた俺の眼前、

桜色を取り戻した唇が、僅かに動く。

「.....カイク.....さん.....」

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